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ABSTRACT

This document comprises the 12 issues for 2002 of the "Child Support Report," which explores problems related to child support enforcement, reports on federal and state government child support enforcement initiatives, and summarizes research related to child support. Featured regularly are editorials and information on events of interest and funding opportunities. Major topics for the 2002 issues include: (1) Michigan's program to reduce the amount of undistributed child support collections held in escrow (January); (2) partnerships of faith-based and community groups with child support services (February); (3) the National Conference of State Legislatures' Child Support Project (March); (4) interstate cooperation on providing information on paternity acknowledgment (April); (5) the initial impact of child support reforms in welfare reform (May); (6) collaboration between the New York State Court System and the Division of Child Support Enforcement to improve child support collections (June); (7) the Passport Denial Program to help states enforce child support obligations (July); (8) language and cultural issues in customer service (August); (9) improving child support enforcement in the 21st century (September); (10) interpreting trends behind the statistics in child support enforcement (October); (11) interstate paternity establishment (November); and (12) New York City's program to provide job training and placement services to help parents satisfy their child support obligations (December). (KB)

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Phil Sharman, Editor

Office of Child Support Enforcement
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

2002

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement Vol. XXIV, No. 1, January 2002

Michigan Tackles Undistributed Funds Held in Escrow

By: Tom Starnes

A Special Improvement Project (SIP) Grant was awarded to the Third Judicial Circuit Court of Michigan for the purpose of seeking to find ways to reduce the amount of undistributed collections being held in escrow. Serving a county population of 2.1 million, with child support collections countywide approaching $316 million per year, and managing the largest Family Court in the State, the Court seemed a natural for a demonstration and research project to deal with the issue of undistributed collections.

One of the first tasks was to perform an aggressive review of the escrow dollars being held. In 2000, when the project began, the escrow balance was nearly $18.6 million. These funds were being held for a variety of reasons: overpayments made by noncustodial parents, invalid addresses for payees, deceased payees, payments for emancipated children, case worker holds, and tax intercept holds.

The project established two key goals: redesign the Court's escrow balance and reduce both the total escrow account balance and the timeframe between posting and disbursement of individual receipts by 50 percent within one year.

In its assessment, the Court determined that the process for assigning escrow balances to categories was inadequate. The Court expanded the categories and changed the priority order of the escrow categories. This will allow funds to be more readily identified, making disbursement and release more efficient.

The Court also identified the three most frequent reasons for the accumulation of escrow dollars: invalid payee address, caseworker holds, and overpayments. The Court organized teams to focus on these accounts and try to find creative ways to release the funds.

The Court identified the three most frequent reasons for the accumulation of escrow dollars: invalid payee address, caseworker holds, and overpayments.

To further intensify its effort to resolve accounts with invalid payee addresses, the Court contracted with a private firm to improve payee address information and published a listing of payees with undistributed child support collections in the local newspaper.

The Court also recognized that some policy changes were necessary. To deal with the issue of

Continued on page 7, "Michigan"

Inside

Puyallup Tribe Receives Federal Funding.....2
OCSE Customer Service Course.....5

PS 031025

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

TANF Funds Help State Prisons Run Life-Skills Programs in Louisiana

By: Elsie Chaisson

Prison programs are one way Louisiana is redirecting some of its available TANF funds. The money is being invested in education, jobs, and life-skills training for prisoners and ex-prisoners with a goal of helping them stay out of prison and take responsibility for their lives, including paying child support owed to their children.

Louisiana's legislature gave the State's Department of Corrections $5 million in TANF funds to carry out four separate initiatives. The largest amount, $3 million, will offer intensive help to men who have been released from prison but need assistance in finding suitable employment to avoid a possible return to prison.

"The goal here," says Department of Corrections Undersecretary Trey Boudreaux, "is to reduce recidivism by providing men with the opportunity to train for and get good jobs." The other $2 million in federal money will be invested in programs involving a limited number of inmates in Louisiana's State prisons, as well as in the Concordia Parish Correctional Facility. "We're interested in the creation and maintenance of two-parent families," says Boudreaux.

State welfare office chief Ann Williamson points out that the grants are mostly going to programs that are already in operation, but the emphasis must be on fathers or the programs cannot get welfare money.

Participation is voluntary, classes are small, and retired teachers are recruited to help. Those who want to participate are first tested to determine their literacy and academic level. Training includes helping participants prepare for the high-school equivalency test, take part in mock job interviews, develop resumes, and learn to keep and balance a checkbook.

For more information, contact Elsie Chaisson at (214) 767-0166.□

Elsie Chaisson is a Program Specialist with the TANF Program in the Dallas Regional Office.

The Puyallup Tribe in Washington State Receives Direct Federal Funding for Its Child Support Enforcement Program

By: Jan Jensen

On December 11, 2001, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians held a celebration in recognition of the awarding of direct federal funding for its Tribal Child Support Program. The recognition ceremony was held at the newly renovated program offices on the Puyallup reservation located in Tacoma, Washington. Washington State Child Support Director Georgiann DeKay participated, along with other Federal, State, and Tribal officials, including Lionel J. Adams, Director of OCSE's Division of Special Staffs, and Lawrence Dunmore, Senior Tribal Child Support Specialist.

The Puyallup Tribal Child Support Program started operating in late 1998 under a child support demonstration grant. Linda Tresaugue has been the coordinator of the program since its inception, and she continues as the Director of the new Tribal Child Support Program. The Tribe, which is located in an urban area, has over 2,500 members and serves over 16,000 Native Americans within its service area.

The Puyallup Tribe is the first Tribe in the Seattle Regional Office area to receive direct funding for its child support program. The Region's Tribal child support staff are currently assisting several other Tribes in the region that are in the process of writing their applications for direct funding.

If you would like more information, contact Jan Jensen at (206) 615-3668.□

Jan Jensen is a Tribal Child Support Specialist in OCSE's Seattle Regional Office.

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Collaboration Is Theme of Commissioner Heller's Remarks at ACF West-Central Hub Mid-Winter Leadership Conference

In early January, Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, Commissioner of OCSE, addressed the ACF West-Central Hub Mid-Winter Leadership Conference in Dallas, Texas. Speaking to an audience that included representatives of Child Care, Child Support, Community Service, Developmental Disabilities, Head Start, TANF, and Tribal Programs, Dr. Heller stressed the importance of working collaboratively. She noted that when she worked at the State level in Pennsylvania as the TANF director, looking at issues from the standpoint of children and families helped her to avoid the trap of thinking categorically.

"For instance," she said, "let's say we have a customer whose job training starts in a week but is still 23rd on the waiting list for child care subsidy. Is a successful job-training outcome likely? Hardly."

Our customers have overlapping needs. Child support is one of those needs, and a critical one. We must see child support as something beyond a check-off on a TANF application; it is important as a source of income. "Child support," Dr. Heller said, "could help keep the TANF 'leaver' from becoming a TANF 'returner.' "

"Child support could help keep the TANF 'leaver' from becoming a TANF 'returner.' "

Research has shown, she pointed out, that women who do not receive the child support they are owed have a 31 percent chance of returning to welfare within six months. In contrast, those who receive as little as $100 a month in support have only a 10 percent chance of going back on the welfare rolls.

This means that ACF programs—indeed, all human services programs—must work together. **Collaboration** is not just a word; it's the key word. In last summer's Research Demonstration Grant Applications, Dr. Heller said by way of example, OCSE asked states to come up with demonstration programs that would promote collaboration between child support agencies and a broad range of human service programs in the community—programs designed to promote and achieve family self-sufficiency.

There are community-based and faith-based organizations that can lend a hand in our efforts to raise the support that our children and families receive.

Collaboration need not be just between government agencies. There are community-based and faith-based organizations, Dr. Heller said, "that can lend a hand in our efforts to raise the support that our children and families receive. Faith-based organizations frequently are able to inspire our hardest-to-reach customers to action."

Dr. Heller reminded her audience that terms such as services integration and one-stop shopping have been around for quite awhile, but she said "we need to get beyond buzzwords to ensure that TANF workers make good referrals to IV-D agencies that can be turned into court orders, and that IV-D workers make every effort to help TANF customers who are working their way off assistance to get reliable child support payments." □

2002 Conference and Events Calendar

January

31-February 2 *"Third Annual Southwestern Fatherhood Conference: Parenthood . . . The Most Rewarding Job You'll Ever Have!"* The Hilton Mesa Pavilion, Mesa, AZ, James Rodriguez (480) 461-6135.

February

5-6 *Joint DOL, ACF, USDA Conference (Ten Hub States) Integrating Systems for Family Self-Sufficiency*, Holiday Inn Apparel Mart Center, Chicago, IL, Helene Stoffey (312) 886-4283.

19-22 *California Family Support Council Annual Training Conference*, Riviera Resort and Racquet Club, Palm Springs, CA, Kris Reiman (209) 381-1311.

25-27 *NCSEA Midyear Policy Forum & Training Conference*, Hyatt Grand Regency, Washington, DC, Carol Henry (202) 624-8180.

27-March 1 *Louisiana Child Support Enforcement Association Annual Conference*, TBA, Baton Rouge, LA, Liz Ocker (504) 365-3345.

March

3-5 *American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) Council Meeting*, Grand Hyatt Downtown, Washington, DC, Justin Latus (202) 682-0100.

20-22 *North Carolina Child Support Council Conference*, Grove Park Inn and Spa, Asheville, NC, Barry Burger (919) 255-3807.

21 *NCSEA Child Support Tele-Talk Broadcast: Customer Service in Difficult Situations*, Carol Henry (202) 624-8180.

27-28 *New York State Annual Child Support Conference*, Sagamore Hotel, Bolton Landing, NY, Monique Rabideau (518) 474-0997.

April

Date to be announced *Oklahoma Child Support Enforcement Conference*, TBA, Joanne Verity (405) 522-2661.

8-10 *OCSE Big Eight Plus One Information Sharing Conference*, Drury Inn and Suites, San Antonio, TX, Dan Fascione (215) 686-3724. (Note: Participants are selected by the Big 8 + 1 child support directors.)

8-10 *NCSEA For-Attorneys-Only Training, TBA*, Atlanta, GA, Carol Henry (202) 624-8180.

28-May 2 *Eastern Regional Interstate Child Support Association Conference*, Omni Netherlands Plaza, Cincinnati, OH, John Graham (724) 830-3263.

May

Date to be announced *Seventh Annual Bi-Regional Interstate Task Force Conference* (Regions IX and X), TBA, Sacramento, CA, J.P. Soden (415) 437-8421. (Note: By invitation only.)

1-3 *North Dakota Family Support Council's Annual Child Support Enforcement Training Conference*, Holiday Inn, Grand Forks, ND, Mary Jo Nordine (701) 787-8575.

5-10 *Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys*, TBA, Vancouver, WA, Linda Langston (360) 753-3953.

27-29 *National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL) Fourth Annual International Fatherhood Conference*, Capitol Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC, Barbara Cleveland (202) 822-6725.

29-31 *Indiana Child Support Training Conference*, Indianapolis Marriott East at Shadeland, Indianapolis, IN, Patti Perkins (317) 232-4922.□

OCSE Customer Service Course Receives Final Field Test

By: Jack Shaw

Customer service should be a positive factor in the performance of the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program. Typically, a customer's first contact with the agency is with front-line staff, and it is here that the customer's impression of the entire agency is formed. Critical to program success, then, is effective customer service.

A customer's first contact with the agency is with front-line staff, and it is here that the customer's impression of the entire agency is formed.

Through OCSE's National Technical Assistance and Training Needs Assessment (see DCL-01-44), states asked for customer service training. In response, OCSE's National Training Center (NTC) designed and developed a 1½-2 day course geared specifically to child support enforcement workers.

In early January, the course, Customer Service Training for CSE Workers, was field-tested in Raleigh, North Carolina. The 21 participants included North Carolina State, county, and local child support staff, as well as staff from the Federal Regional office in Atlanta. The course was pilot-tested in the District of Columbia and previously field-tested in Missouri.

The purpose of the training was to equip CSE workers with practical tools to improve their customer service skills and attitudes. Participative lectures, group discussions, individual exercises, and role plays make the course lively and personal. Also, participants are given many opportunities to share their experiences and learn from each other. In evaluation comments, participants judged the course to be insightful, informative, and useful. The exercises, role plays, and group discussions were rated excellent.

Participants share a lighter moment during TOT

North Carolina's CSE Director, Barry Miller, stated, "In today's economy, whether in the public or private sector, customers need and expect good service from the company or public entity with which they do business. . . . OCSE's new customer service training program offers excellent skills-development opportunities for child support enforcement staff. North Carolina will definitely utilize this training for the 1600 plus CSE staff."

According to the State's Policy and Training Specialist, Sandra Chestnut, "Often such topics sound very generic and staff do not see the relevance to their jobs. But in this instance, the material and presentation were directed specifically to CSE." Barry Burger, North Carolina's Assistant Chief for Program Operations, agreed, calling the course "well-

Continued on page 7, "Customer Service"

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A Sampling of Current HHS Funded Research Related to Child Support and Family Structure

State policies to promote and support marriage

The purpose of this project is to inventory state-level policies that directly relate to the goal of promoting and supporting marriage. The inventory will include policies relating to public outreach, provisions of divorce law, marriage preparation and support services, and tax code transfer policies, as well as education curricula, and youth development.

Relying primarily on existing sources of information and a panel of national experts on marriage policy, researchers will document the existence of each policy across states. Several examples of what the policies look like in practice will be highlighted, as well as the policies' legislative histories. Lewin Group of Falls Church, Virginia is conducting the research under a grant from the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE).

Marriage as a protective force against economic hardship

The purpose of the project is to understand the influence of marriage and other family structures on economic well-being, with an emphasis on the low-income population. Using descriptive and multivariate techniques, researchers will analyze the probability of poverty and material hardship within various family structures, including married, cohabiting, and single parent families.

They also will examine whether the influence of family structure on economic well-being differs by race and socio-economic status. The Urban Institute of Washington, DC is conducting the research under a grant from ASPE.

The National Survey of Family Growth

The National Survey of Family Growth is a primary national survey for understanding issues around fertility and family formation. In the past, the survey has only asked questions of a random sample of about 13,000 women ages 15 to 44.

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), the lead federal agency, has now added direct interviews of 7,000 men to obtain information from them about fertility and family formation similar to that obtained from women.

While we know from other research that gender influences decision-making around sex and family formation, our ability to understand these dynamics is greatly constrained by a lack of solid information from men regarding their attitudes and behaviors. This expansion has implications for policy development in the areas of teen pregnancy prevention, out-of-wedlock childbearing, welfare, child support and paternity establishment, and father involvement. The University of Michigan has a contract to conduct the survey with NCHS. The research is being funded by a consortium of HHS agencies, including ACF and ASPE.

If you would like to know more about these projects, contact Linda Mellgren in the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at (202) 690-6806.□

Child Support Children First

Michigan

Continued from page 1

caseworker holds, a policy was instituted establishing a sixty-day limit on any hold. Supervisory approval would be necessary for any extension of this limit. In the case of overpaid accounts, a policy was es-tablished to refer these to a special team for review, and in cases where the support obligation has been met, the income withholding orders are being discontinued. The Court also identified the need to isolate joint tax intercept funds from the existing categories to better manage the accumulation of funds.

As a result of the Court's efforts, escrow funds held over one year have been reduced by over 40 percent. Further, of the entire balance of $15,645,641 held on July 15, 2000, only $2,720,670 remains in escrow in the "funds held over one year" category.

While it is true that there will always be a necessity to hold certain funds in escrow due to statutory holds (tax intercepts) or funds pending a legal action, the Court feels that having well-defined escrow categories and priorties in place will go a long way toward streamlining the processing of escrow balances.

If you would like more information, call Katherine Myers at Third Judicial Circuit Court at (313) 224-8843.□

Tom Starnes is an Advocacy Relations Specialist in OCSE's Division of Consumer Services.

Customer Service

Continued from page 5

structured, comprehensive, and on point."

This course is not just for front-line workers. The curriculum identifies "customer" as any person with whom a child support worker comes into contact in carrying out his or her duties. Potential customers include custodial parents, noncustodial parents, employers, courts, and other agencies, as well as our own child support enforcement colleagues.

The Child Support Enforcement program's product is information and service. Often we need something from our customers, such as information about the noncustodial parent or employment. By the same token, customers come to the CSE agency for service: for example, to get paternity established or an order enforced. Customer service is the cornerstone of all that we do.

"In this course, we have tried to build in opportunities for participants to experience good and bad examples of customer service," says Robyn Large, one of the course trainers. "We learn a lot in each class about what works, what doesn't work, and what participants at all levels of the Child Support Enforcement program need to gain from the training to help them do their jobs more effectively."

"In this course, we have tried to build in opportunities for participants to experience good and bad examples of customer service,"

.....Robyn Large.

As with all of the training courses that NTC develops, the Customer Service curriculum, participant guides, and visual aids, when they are finalized, will be available for download on the National Electronic Child Support Resource System.

For more information, contact Jack Shaw in the National Training Center at (202) 401-5144.□

Jack Shaw is a Training Specialist assigned to OCSE's National Training Center, Division of State, Tribal and Local Assistance.

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Child Support Report

Proportion of Children Living with Single Mother Declines

Between 1995 and 2000, the proportion of children younger than 18 living with a single mother declined from 19.9 percent to 18.4 percent. In addition, the proportion of children living with two married parents (including stepparents) remained essentially unchanged during this period, at about 70 percent.

Both trends represent changes relative to trends over the 1985 - 1990 period when the share of children living with a single mother remained essentially constant and the share of children living with married parents declined. ☐

Reported in the September 2001 "Child Support Bulletin" of The Children's Foundation, Washington, D.C. Used with permission.

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement Vol. XXIV, No. 2, February 2002

Faith-Based and Community Groups Partner with Child Support to Help Customers in Fairfield County, Ohio

By: Carri Brown

Involving faith-based and community organizations in the delivery of child support services is good practice: They have unique strengths that cannot be duplicated within traditional governmental organizations. The government needs faith-based and community organizations as partners.

Faith-based and community groups are trusted by and are in close contact with the local population served. And while much attention has been placed on grants and contracts, funding is not the whole story.

The government needs faith-based and community organizations as partners.

Community and faith-based groups can play a key role in providing networking and wrap-around services for child-support related issues, such as employment, counseling, and legal issues relating to custody and parenting time, as well as referrals for education, training, health concerns, and social or recreational activities for children and families.

In Fairfield County, Ohio, there are some exciting activities evolving from faith-based and community partnerships. The Fairfield County Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) is part of a combined County Job and Family Services initiative. The agency holds an annual Information Night, a customer service event held outside of normal business hours.

This event provides an opportunity for customers and child support partners to obtain the latest information about child support topics and to participate in case management activities. Local churches cooperate by inserting flyers into bulletins and newsletters, as well as by sending representatives to the event to learn about the procedures and services.

In addition, the CSEA sends representatives to ministerial association meetings to share information. Advertisements and flyers about community and faith-based counseling programs for recently divorced parents are regularly distributed and posted at the CSEA.

The local First United Methodist Church provides space for a new partnership with the Fairfield County Bar Association and the Southeastern Legal Aid Society. The partnership is known as the Legal Clinic, and it provides pro bono legal services.

The CSEA provides volunteer intake personnel and makes referrals to the Clinic for private legal matters, such as those concerning the issues of custody and

Continued on page 7, "Faith Based"

PS 031025

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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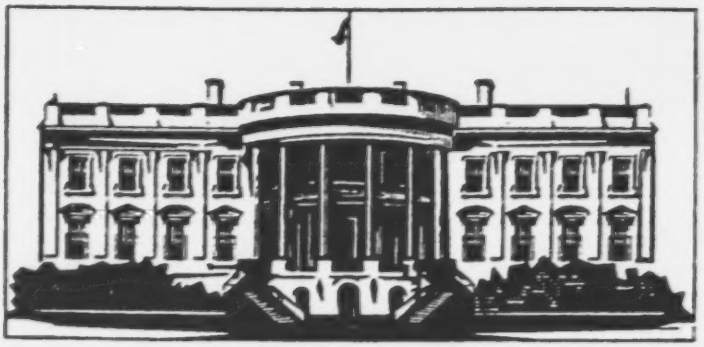
Inside

Lessons from the Parents' Fair Share Evaluation.....3
The Virtual Training Library.....6

Child Support Proposals in the Administration's 2003 Budget



"Child support enforcement is an important component of the federal and state effort to promote family self-sufficiency." President George W. Bush

Child support highlights of the Administration's 2003 budget proposals include:

- The Federal Government would share in costs if a state creates a pass-through and disregard policy (for collections distributed to TANF families and disregarded for TANF eligibility) or increases its current pass-through. The Federal Government would absorb its share (for most states about one-half) or the cost of the pass-through increases, up to the greater of $100 pass-through per month or $50 over the current state pass-through (to begin 10/1/04);
- The Federal Government would also share in costs when states opt to simplify collection distribution rules by distributing all post-TANF arrears collections to the family (to begin 10/1/04);
- Reduce the threshold for passport denial from $5,000 to $2,500 in arrears owed;
- Reinstate the requirement that states review and adjust child support orders to TANF families every three years;
- Expand the federal administrative offset program to intercept Social Security benefits (maximum of 15 percent of benefits over $760 monthly—allows states to use mechanism that can already be used when federal debts are owed;) and
- Mandate a modest annual user fee of $25 for child support cases with collections: applies to those who have never been on assistance. Revenue from fees would be split between the state and the Federal Government at the normal FFP rate.

"These legislative proposals will help move the program towards a focus on families."

.....OCSE Commissioneer Sherri Z. Heller

"These legislative proposals," said OCSE Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller, " will help move the program towards a focus on families and away from the historic purpose of recoupment of federal and state outlays for welfare. When combined with other income, child support collections passed through to TANF families can provide the boost needed for a family to attain self-sufficiency."□

Lessons from the Parents' Fair Share Evaluation

Findings from the November 2001 evaluation of the Parents' Fair Share projects include: increases in employment rates and earnings for the most disadvantaged men, a more active role in parenting by some fathers, and increases in the payment of child support.

The Parents' Fair Share package of services led more men to pay support than they would have otherwise.

Parents' Fair Share grew out of the Family Support Act of 1988—legislation aimed at improving the economic status of children and parents receiving welfare. Parents' Fair Share was one of the first programs to target employment and training services to low-income noncustodial parents (the vast majority of whom are fathers), and it included a large-scale evaluation component.

The Family Support Act also included a provision to allow a group of states to offer employment and training services to low-income noncustodial parents. This provision sought to test whether the employment and training services that had been found to be effective for mothers receiving welfare might also help fathers.

Local child support agencies in each Parents' Fair Share site were asked to focus attention on cases with low-income, unemployed men. They also were asked to lower the fathers' child support orders while they participated in Parents' Fair Share, to coordinate with service providers, and modify support orders when the fathers found employment or failed to comply with Parents' Fair Share requirements.

Many of the men were already quite involved in their children's lives, contrary to popular perception. Although most of the men expressed a strong commitment to their children, many were hindered in their efforts to be effective parents, often because their own fathers had not been involved parents.

Findings

Employment

Parents' Fair Share increased employment rates and earnings for the most disadvantaged men—those with more severe employment barriers, such as having no high school diploma and little recent work experience.

Fathers' Involvement

Some Parents' Fair Share fathers—mainly those who had been the least likely to visit their children when the program began—took a more active role in parenting.

Child Support

The Parents' Fair Share package of services led more men to pay support than they would have otherwise. Bringing in low-income noncustodial fathers to assess their eligibility for Parents' Fair Share increased child support payments. For the fathers who were found eligible, Parents' Fair Share also increased child support payment rates. □

Source: "The Challenge of Helping Low-Income Fathers Support Their Children: Final Lessons from Parents' Fair Share," *by Cynthia Miller and Virginia Knox, November 2001, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation. With permission.*

Dr. Sherri Z. Heller Recognizes Dallas Hospital for Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgments

On January 8, 2002, OCSE Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller toured Medical City Dallas Hospital, commending the hospital for its work with unmarried parents in seeking to have paternity acknowledged at the time of a child's birth.

Voluntary acknowledgment of paternity, the first step in ensuring an unmarried father's involvement in his child's life, was obtained on 69 percent of the births to unmarried parents that occurred at the hospital between September 1, 2000 and August 31, 2001.

Acknowledgment of paternity establishes *legal* fatherhood, so that children are eligible for child support and benefits such as Social Security, veterans' survivor benefits, and health insurance.

Dr. Heller discussed with hospital staff how to go about asking the unwed parents if they were considering marriage at the time of paternity establishment. With 83 percent of unmarried parents romantically involved at the time of the child's birth, and studies showing that kids do better when they are raised in homes where there are two married parents, "It would seem to be an ideal time to bring up the subject of marriage," she said.

Nationally, in FY 2000, 1.6 million paternities were established. Of that total, 688,000 were voluntarily acknowledged at hospital sites.□

Military Paydays

Wage withholding for active duty military is prepared and mailed on the first of the month after the month from which the money is garnished. The military pay system is programmed so that when a payday falls on a weekend or holiday, checks are mailed on the last business day before the holiday or weekend. Below, as a service to our military families, is a listing of the Defense Joint Military Pay System end-of-month paydays for January through December 2002, together with the child support payday.

Payday	Child Support	Payment Made
February 1	February 1	January support payment
March 1	March 1	February support payment
April 1	April 1	March support payment
May 1	May 1	April support payment
June 1	**May 31**	**May support payment**
July 1	July 1	June support payment
August 1	August 1	July support payment
September 1	**August 31**	**August support payment**
October 1	October 1	September support payment
November 1	November 1	October support payment
December 1	**November 31**	**November support payment**
January 1	**December 31**	**December support payment.**□

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State Innovations

In **Minnesota** child support offices routinely include noncustodial fathers in their outreach. Reaching out to these fathers who are in jail or prison, however, is an additional effort that State and county staff are undertaking. Child support materials are provided to incarcerated parents at intake interviews early in their sentences. Inmates receive the parent handbook, a sample modification request letter, and tips for navigating the system and staying connected to their children.

Virginia's Child Support Enforcement Program, which services 558,000 children, now has an interactive Web application to give customers fast and accurate information about their child support cases. The Web application is statewide and monitored centrally by child support and communications staff in the headquarters office in Richmond. It provides customers with the last six payments made, as well as selected case information, such as court dates and enforcement actions.□

South Dakota Posters Bolster Collections

Governor Bill Janklow has unveiled South Dakota's latest child support poster, featuring four of the State's most evasive child support offenders. The posters are issued by the Department of Social Services, and this year's poster features three men and one woman who owe, in total, more than $125,000 in back support to their children.

"The posters send a strong message to others that may think they can get away with not supporting their children," said Governor Janklow.

Since the start of the campaign in 1995, South Dakota's Office of Child Support Enforcement has collected more than $221,000 from 35 of the 50 parents featured on the posters. □

Child Support Enforcement Successes

Sometimes the true value of automation gets forgotten amid its speed and efficiency. In the Child Support Enforcement Program, federal automation projects have revolutionized local governments' whole way of doing business.

In Pennsylvania, for example, "Sylvia" and her 13-year old daughter received welfare. Unfortunately, a wage attachment couldn't be used to collect child support from the noncustodial father because he was self-employed. He neither paid child support regularly nor in full.

Federal automation projects have revolutionized local governments' whole way of doing business.

Over time, because of his sporadic payments, outstanding child support payments grew to $9,000. The father made payments of $2 a week toward the back support, telling the judge that was the best he could do. But with the advent of the Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) program, the county child support agency located about $9,000 of his assets and seized them to pay off the entire amount of back support owed.

In another Pennsylvania case, the National Directory of New Hires was used to identify the new employment of a noncustodial parent who had not paid any support since 1983. The parent skipped out on his new employment immediately, but the employer gave the local child support agency his forwarding address. Now, he pays $100 in support every two weeks.□

From the Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 2003.

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The Virtual Training Library: A New Tool for Trainers

The Office of Child Support Enforcement's (OCSE) National Training Center (NTC) now has available a Virtual Training Library. The library is located at URL: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/prgrpt.htm .

The Library consists of curricula that can be downloaded and printed out. Included are trainer and participant guides, PowerPoint presentations, and handouts. In short, the Virtual Training Library has everything a trainer needs to get a course delivery up and running.

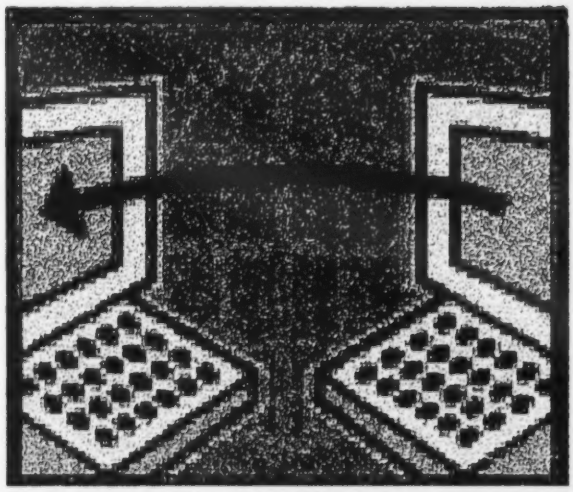
Courses include: *Customer Service, Training of Trainers (TOT), Step-by-Step Child Support for Employers, FIDM, Management Development Training for IV-D Directors and Executive Staff,* and *PRWORA's Child Support Distribution Requirements.*

There is also a section on Web Based Training that includes courses on: *Child Support Enforcement Orientation, Locate, Paternity Establishment, Enforcing the Order, Interstate Case Processing/ UIFSA,* and *Distribution.*

"Converting the computer based training courses to Web Based Training makes them more readily available to our state and local training partners."

.....Michelle Jefferson

Michelle Jefferson, Director of OCSE's Division of State, Local, and Tribal Assistance says, "Converting the computer based training courses to Web Based Training makes them more readily available to our state and local training partners."



Adds National Training Center Chief Yvette Hilderson Riddick, "We're very interested in your reaction to these courses. Please let us know how you like them."

The Virtual Training Library also features "Who's Training Who," a schedule of federal, state, and local conferences. This section of the Library includes a listing of NTC training deliverables, as well.

New courses will be added as they are developed. To access the Library, go to OCSE's Home Page and click on the Virtual Training Library icon. If you have comments on the courses, or would like further information about them, contact OCSE's Charlene Butler at (202) 401-5091.□

Child Support Children First

Safe and Stable Families Initiative Becomes Law

The Safe and Stable Families Initiative was signed into law by President George W. Bush in December 2001. The legislation expands services to strengthen families, creates and expands mentoring programs for children whose parents are in prison, and enhances educational opportunities for children leaving foster care.

The bill also authorizes . . . $67 million in fiscal years 2002 and 2003 for projects that mentor children of prisoners.

Specifically, the bill reauthorizes and substantially expands the resources available to states and Indian Tribes to strengthen families at risk and ensure the safety and permanency of placements of vulnerable children through the "Promoting Safe and Stable Families" program. This program is funded at $505 million a year, an historic increase in spending of $200 million annually. And—important for child support enforcement—the legislation allows these funds to be used for services that strengthen parental relationships and promote healthy marriages.

The bill also authorizes an initial $67 million in fiscal years 2002 and 2003 for projects that mentor children of prisoners (an estimated 1.5 million children have a parent in prison), and an additional $60 million of annual funding to states for education and training vouchers for youth between the ages of 16 and 21. □

Faith-Based

Continued from page 1

parenting time (or visitation), and, in turn, the Clinic makes referrals to the CSEA in matters of child support. As a matter of fact, the Clinic serves as a first point of contact for many customers requiring various governmental or community services, and the partnerships allow for a more seamless delivery of services for those that need help the most.

In the Fairfield County community, the month of April is declared "Family Festival" month, in which community and government organizations combine to celebrate the family. More than 20 government, non-profit, business, and community organizations come together to provide fun and educational activities that emphasize the importance of families and children to the community. The local United Way of Fairfield County supports the Family Festival with advertising and promotional dollars.

The CSEA is now working on a partnership with the County Sheriff, local faith-based organizations, and community counseling services to provide an educational and outreach program to the incarcerated or non-compliant obligor. The idea is that counselors, ministers, and leaders in faith-based organizations can serve as role models for compliance and can help change behavior. The outreach and education program is in its infancy stages, with a pilot expected to be in place during the year 2002.

To accomplish the mission of the child support program, agencies must see the program from the point of view of the customer. Agencies must work hard to improve communication, cooperation, and collaboration within the community. Involving faith-based and community groups is part of a customer service philosophy that will help build and preserve trust, improve satisfaction in the government program, increase child support collections, and avoid payment delays. □

Carri Brown is Director of the Child Support Enforcement agency in Fairfield County, Ohio.

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Child Support Report

Earned Income Tax Credits Can Benefit Child Support Customers

Many people in the child support program caseload could benefit by becoming more aware of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Changes for the year 2001 make the EITC worth more money to low and moderate income employees than ever before---up to $4,008 for some families.

Workers who were raising one child in their home and had family income of less than $28,281 in 2001 can get an EITC of up to $2,428. Workers who were raising more than one child in their home and had family income of less than $32,121 in 2001 can get an EITC of up to $4,008.

Workers who were not raising children in their home but were between ages 25 and 64 on December 31, 2001 and had income below $10,710, can get an EITC of up to $364. In addition, grandparents who work and are raising grandchildren may qualify for the EITC.

For more information, contact Paul Maiers in ACF's Office of Family Assistance at (202) 401-5438.☐

Child Support Report
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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement — Vol. XXIV, No. 3, March 2002

National Conference of State Legislatures' Child Support Project

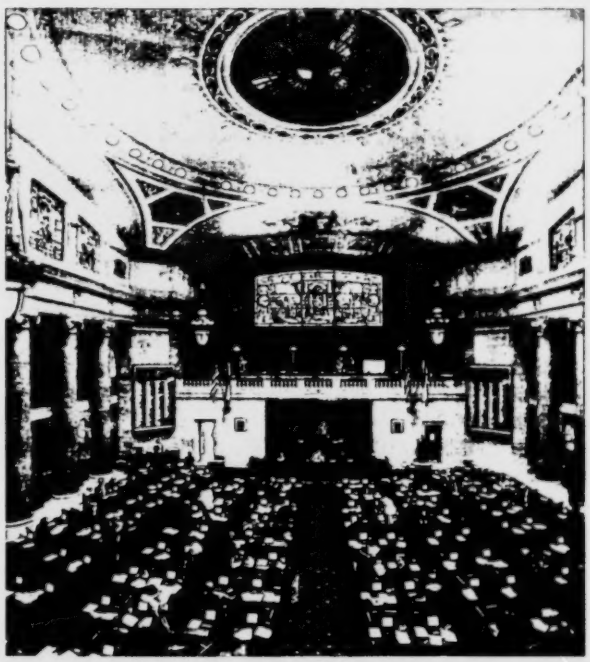
The National Conference of State Legislatures' Child Support Project recently conducted a national survey of state legislators, designed to determine the current and emerging issues in child support that are of particular concern to legislators. Policymakers are passionate and knowledgeable about child support, and hungry for more information. Their responses provide insight into the challenges of making child support policy in an increasingly complex environment. Analysis of survey data yielded eight broad categories of interest:

Adequate, equitable guidelines

"It is important to develop support guidelines that make sense, that are flexible and easy for judges to understand and use efficiently." - Representative Opio Toure, Oklahoma

"Do the formulas still make sense when you think about high and middle income parents with shared custody? How do you credit time? How do you determine gross salary when a parent remarries?" - Senator Stephen Saland, New York

Most legislators considered this an area of primary concern. Policymakers are particularly concerned that the current approach to child support guidelines may be too simplistic for the ways many Americans live their lives. Respondents touched on the quandary of whether to implement clear and rigid guidelines for the awarding of support, or allow more flexibility and judicial discretion to accommodate the intricacies of modern life.



Missouri House Chamber

Collection and enforcement

Policymakers indicated that this was an important area. Legislators voiced frustration about continuing resistance to the use of social security numbers, concerns about privacy, and difficulty in tracking and enforcing orders across state lines. They are also concerned about the risks and merits of forgiving large

Continued on page 6, "NCSL Project"

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U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Inside

Child Support Training Via the Internet.....3
Multi-Agency Collaboration.....5

Georgia Fatherhood Works!

A Statewide Comprehensive Program for Low-income Noncustodial Fathers

Child Support Enforcement (CSE) in the Georgia Department of Human Resources has created the Georgia Fatherhood Services Network (Network) to provide employment and life skills training to unemployed and underemployed noncustodial parents and thereby increase child support payments.

The Network is responsible for operating fatherhood programs through contracts with several service providers. The largest service provider, the Department of Adult and Technical Education, established a fatherhood program on each of the 36 technical college campuses throughout the state of Georgia. The Georgia Department of Labor works with the Georgia Fatherhood Program to provide Statewide job placement support.

Child Support Enforcement refers noncustodial parents who are unemployed or underemployed to the Georgia Fatherhood Program, where they receive assessment, development of employability plans, life skills training, job-readiness training and job placement. Approximately 30% of participants receive short- and long-term skills training in fields such as carpentry, computer repair, car repair and welding.

The Georgia program addresses child support enforcement, responsible fatherhood, and job counseling/training/placement and peer support. Visitation services are also available to participants through Access and Visitation.

Case managers are an essential component of the fatherhood programs and provide a wide range of services and referrals to the noncustodial parents. Length of time in the training program varies according to training needs. Most participants spend an average of 4-6 months in the program. During that time, they are required to satisfy at least 50% of their child support obligations. Case managers track participants monthly to determine employment retention for 120 days following the completion of the program.

Fourteen CSE Regional Fatherhood Coordinators provide liaison communications between CSE and fatherhood program services. A critical factor of the program is the frequent communication between the fatherhood staff and the participant's agent. CSE Regional Fatherhood coordinators provide case agents with constant updates of participant progress through documentation on the CSE computerized database.

A critical factor of the program is the frequent communication between the fatherhood staff and the participant's agent.

The program serves approximately 3000 noncustodial parents a year. Over 10,000 noncustodial parents have received at least one service from the program. In FY'01, 3,115 participants received services; 47% became employed and are paying their child support obligations.

A university-based evaluation team conducted research with 250 noncustodial parents at three program sites located in the metro, urban, and rural areas of Georgia. A control group of non-fatherhood participants was used for comparison.

Results indicate that participants in the Fatherhood Program had a significant gain in employment, from 30% to 66%. In comparison, the control group had no significant gain in employment. Moreover, participants in the Fatherhood Program acquired

Continued on page 7, "Georgia"

Child Support Training Opportunities Via the Internet

The Texas IV-D staff is housed in over 70 field offices, regional offices and phone banks spread across the state. To ensure that all employees have access to the training they need, the Child Support Division (CSD) is maximizing use of the Internet by placing training tools on the CSD Intranet.

All agency employees can access the site through one of two browsers on their computers. Intranet training is designed to meet the needs of both new employees who may have a case-processing question and seasoned employees who are attempting to complete the 25 hours of mandatory training/professional development required each year. The site is maintained by state office training staff in Austin. Included on the site are the following options:

- **Training Calendar, Registration and Course Descriptions**: This provides information on classes and registration requirements.
- **Online Procedures**: All policy and procedure documents have been converted to HTML and are available for viewing or downloading.
- **Case Handbook**: An online reference manual containing agency wide policy e-mails and other electronic documents. The documents are organized by child support functions to assist field office staff in case processing.
- **OCSE CD-ROMs**: These federal resources are available in six CDs, organized by child support functions. Every field office and Call Center has a complete set that is checked out periodically for new and existing employees to view from their workstations.
- **On-line Child Support Virtual University**: CSD has contracted with two Internet vendors to provide a variety of technical and human resource development training that can be accessed from an employee's desktop.
- **CSD Learning Management System**: CSD has contracted with an Internet vendor to provide a web-based Learning Management System (LMS). LMS functions as a central location for all on-line training, accepts training requests, and records training hours for on-line training courses automatically.
- **Intranet Training Resources Under Development**:

Training Discussion Forum: Training staff are developing a topic-driven message board that allows the trainer and trainees to engage in pre- and post-training discussions from their work stations.

CSD On-line Training: Training staff are developing computer-based training (CBT) courses on child support and agency-required training topics. □

If you have any questions, contact Rudy Williams at (512)460-6517 or e-mail to Rudy.Williams@cs.oag.state.tx.us.

Commissioner Heller Addresses the National Child Support Association's Midyear Policy Forum and Training Conference

Addressing the opening session of the National Child Support Association's Midyear Policy Forum and Training Conference on February 25, 2002, Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, Commissioner of OCSE, stressed the importance of, "not forgetting to see things from the point of view of the customer."

Speaking to the approximately 400 persons gathered in Washington, D. C., Dr. Heller noted that moving to the Nation's Capital does tend to change one's perspective a bit. However, she does not intend to "switch from courthouse perspective or state house perspective to beltway perspective."

Commissioner Heller listed some of the successes of the child support program, including a near doubling of the number of cases with a collection. But, the state-reported data indicate that only 42% of those who seek help from a child support office get any collection at all.

"The child support program has been virtually re-invented."

Dr. Heller stressed that "this does not mean we are doing a bad job." Quite the contrary, she went on to say. "The child support program has been virtually re-invented." She asserted, "The National Directory of New Hires, State Disbursement Units, the Financial Institution Data Match, are just a few achievements that indicate that the program has taken a giant step forward. Even with these improvements in automation capabilities, our customers are not convinced that they are being better served." The Commissioner likened this to when banks automated their services; it took a decade for the customers to feel the benefits of such things as paying on-line or touch-tone balance checking.

"The President's budget proposal sends a clear message that the child support enforcement program is a needed service upon which families depend."

Dr. Heller noted that trying to see things from the point of view of the customer would necessitate our determining just who our customers are. Traditionally, child support workers have thought of their customers as just the two parties to the case. Looking at matters from the family's point of view, however, suggests that who makes up a case is much broader; grandparents, stepparents, and the children themselves are also our customers.

Commissioner Heller closed her remarks with a reference to the President's budget proposal. "The significance of this," she said, "is that it sends a clear message that the child support enforcement program is a needed service upon which families depend. It is not just the traditional message about child support as a welfare cost-recovery system." The President's budget proposal is located at:

[http:www.whitehouse.gov/news/2002/02/20020226.html.]

Dr. Heller concluded with the reminder that the families who depend on the child support program are not just welfare families. When more than 50 percent "aren't getting the help they need, this is what we should be talking about."□

Multi-Agency Collaboration Key To Succeeding with Child Support

By: Mark J. Ponsolle

Minnesota's child support enforcement system has undergone many changes in the last 20 years. Returning to the child support community after having left for a side trip through the world of criminal prosecution, I was struck by all the changes that had occurred.

The most significant change, occurring in the last several years, is that government agencies working in child support have begun to recognize their common goals and join forces.

"Governmental agencies have taken the giant step of recognizing the need to work together toward the common goal of supporting children."

The Child Support Enforcement Division of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, county IV-D agencies and county attorney offices—although recognizing and respecting their different roles and responsibilities—are seeking common ground in order to build a stronger system. We are working to establish and enforce child support obligations efficiently, effectively and with respect for the legal rights of all the parties involved.

I recognize that we have a long way to go. Tensions that sometime exist among agencies continue to inhibit our reaching our primary goal. That goal is the orderly transfer of resources from one person to another for the benefit of a child.

We must keep this primary goal in mind when we evaluate what policies and procedures to develop and what course of action to take in any given case. We must then work cooperatively to achieve it.

It is also important to recognize what we have accomplished. The impressive statistics and numbers do not tell the full story. What is equally impressive is that governmental agencies have taken the giant step of recognizing the need to work together toward the common goal of supporting children.

Those of us working in the child support community should feel proud of all we have been able to accomplish. To be sure, there is more to be done, but, if we continue on this road of cooperation, our future accomplishments will be even greater.

Extracted from *Child Support Quarterly*, a publication of the Minnesota Child Support Program, Fall 2001."

Mark J Ponsolle is Director of the Child Support Enforcement Division of the Office of the Ramsey County Attorney, Minnesota.

We Apologize

Mail service in Washington was disrupted a few months ago and for several weeks, all mail deliveries to the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) stopped. Regular deliveries have resumed, but delays continue due to the irradiation process. It may be some time before this situation is corrected. If you have written to us recently, your letter very likely was among those delayed, and we just wanted you to know.□

NCSL Project

Continued from page 1

child support arrears amounts, balancing fairness to the child, the custodial parent and the state with the potential benefit of a one-time forgiveness of debt.

Comparative data

Many legislators mentioned that they felt hampered by a lack of good information. They want independent sources of current and comparative data on a number of topics. Most respondents expressed a desire for data that show success in child support enforcement, and what states have done to achieve that success. Policymakers feel there is a lot to be learned from what has not worked in other states.

Distribution and pass-through

"It is a problem when welfare-to-work moms finally get a child support payment but it goes to the state for past support. This needs to stop." - Senator Sheila Kuehl, California

Many respondents are concerned about the pass-through of payments from the state to the families and children intended to receive the payment. While some of this concern was about the efficiency of central distribution units, much of it was more philosophical. The practice of aggressively collecting support only to send that money to the state and federal governments as repayment, rather than to the family itself, is viewed as unfair.

Balanced policy-making

"We need to stop making non-custodial parents feel like criminals, and start making policy that encourages a positive relationship between parent and child." - Senator Judy Lee, North Dakota

Although a few legislators used the term "balanced policy" to refer to more even-handed treatment for custodial mothers, most respondents concerned about this issue were referring to non-custodial fathers. Policymakers cited fathers' rights as a present or growing concern. Of particular interest was the question of whether non-custodial parents paying support have a right to know precisely how that money is being spent. Referring to it as the "accountability movement," some respondents felt that the obligor should have reasonable assurance that the support being paid was of direct benefit to the child(ren). Others were just as adamant that forcing custodial parents to account for how child support money is spent is futile, ridiculous or patently offensive.

Visitation

"A key factor in child support policymaking is the relationship between visitation and child support. Policies should support relationship building, not undermine it." - Senator Kate Brown, Oregon

Legislators expressed concern for the relationship between children and non-custodial parents and the part that payment or non-payment of child support plays in building those crucial bonds. Policymakers spoke to this issue with a surprisingly singular voice: The psychological support of a child should be every bit as important as financial support in making sound policy.

Representative Toby Goodman, Texas

Implementing federal mandates

"Employers are now responsible for handling most child support payments through income withholding. Soon, complying with medical support requirements will also fall to employers. How can legislators facilitate compliance by employers with the new medical support requirements?" - Representative Toby Goodman, Texas

Child Support Children First

Responses in this category were of two types: (1) the need for a better understanding of exactly what the federal government requires and what might fall under state discretion (including better information about waivers); and (2) technological difficulties in implementation, such as hardware incompatibility, lack of expertise in managing a centralized system, the often cumbersome nature of central distribution units, and the lack of trained personnel to keep the system running.

Restructuring

Legislators questioned where to house Child Support Enforcement within state government, and whether or not authority over CSE should be shared by more than one state department.□

Georgia

Continued from page 2

jobs with wages comparable to employed noncustodial parents in the control group. Participants in the Fatherhood Program also experienced a 14% gain in health benefits for children, from 7% to 21%. This research supports the fact that the Georgia Fatherhood Program is having an impact on employment of noncustodial parents.

Essential to the success of this program has been the consideration given to the following: data collection to demonstrate outcome and program costs; case management with adequate referral sources; service providers with an infrastructure to provide assessment and training services as well as contacts within the local communities for job leads; and partnership with a local university to provide third party evaluation and research.□

Contact:
Robert Johnson, Fatherhood State Consultant
(404) 657-9222
Georgia Fatherhood Hotline
1-888-4FATHER
fatherhood@cse.state.dhr.ga.us

Washington State Success Story

By: Wendy Gray

In what can be described as a classic interstate case,the Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) was instrumental in allowing Washington to get full payment of a child support debt to a family.

The parties in this case were married in Florida. As the marriage was breaking up, however, the wife, now pregnant, moved back to be with her relatives in Washington and the husband moved to Oklahoma. After the child was born, the husband obtained an Oklahoma divorce, which included an order to pay $100 per month in child support. He never paid.

The husband moved to Texas where Washington's Division of Child Support (DCS) served him a support order in 1999. He objected to the order, so Washington withdrew and began working with Texas to start UIFSA processing of the case.

In 2001, the State of Washington served the non-custodial parent (NCP) with a notice of support debt and a demand for payment. The NCP hired an attorney and disputed Washington's personal jurisdiction. Washington's Conference Board ruled in favor of DCS, and the state pursued enforcement of the case.

DCS got an FIDM hit on a New Jersey account and Washington seized the full payment of $21,200. The NCP again disputed jurisdiction contending that because he was in Texas, Washington did not have personal jurisdiction, over him and could not take collection action. He then filed suit in King County (WA) Superior Court.

Meanwhile, DCS staff contacted Texas officials to ask them to speed up their processing of the case, so they could attach the funds in case Washington lost in court. DCS staff also worked closely with the Washington State Attorney General's Office. Texas scheduled a hearing that was postponed while the NCP was pursuing his Washington court case. Ultimately, the NCP and his attorney gave up and withdrew their case.

This story is especially poignant because the mother is terminally ill with cancer. Washington DCS personnel wanted to make certain that they got the money into her hands before she died, so that it could be used for the college education of her 20-year-old daughter. They did.□

Wendy Gray, HHS, OCSE's Office of Automation and Program Operations.

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Child Support Report

Expectations

Nearly 9 in 10 people are expected to marry sometime in their lives, according to a report released in February 2002 by the Commerce Department's Census Bureau. Most adults have married only once. About 52 percent of currently married couples had reached at least their 15th anniversary in 1996, and 5 percent of them had reached at least their golden anniversary (50 years).

The report is the Census Bureau's first comprehensive portrait of marriage and divorce in nearly 10 years and, unlike other data sources, provides estimates for men's and women's marital patterns through their lifetimes.

It uses data from the 1996 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation. Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error.☐

Source: *U.S. Census Bureau*, http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2002/cb02-19.html

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement Vol. XXIV, No. 4, April 2002

West Virginia

Interstate Paternity Acknowledgement Certification Transmission Impact

A Federal OCSE Special Improvement Project grant was awarded to the West Virginia Bureau for Child Support Enforcement (WV BCSE) to improve interstate case processing by providing an electronic method to quickly and efficiently access West Virginia birth indexes, make paternity determinations and request birth certificates.

One of the most difficult tasks encountered by child support workers is to determine the type of action to initiate when the paternity status of the child is unknown. This becomes even more difficult when the child's birth occurred in another state and the worker has to locate a copy of the child's birth certificate.

The Interstate Paternity Acknowledgment Certification Transmission IPACT (IPACT) web-site was developed in cooperation with the WV Vital Registration Office (WV VRO). IPACT is a secure web-site that allows authorized workers throughout the country to access the WV birth indexes, determine if the birth certificate is on file and request certified copies of the birth certificate, if needed. There are plans to add paternity affidavits and WV death indexes soon. Once a request is made, the worker receives a confirmation and the request is immediately received in the WV VRO.

IPACT offers a simplified method for determining the parentage of a child through on-line access to WV birth indexes. This enables the worker to view the birth indexes to determine if a father is listed on the child's birth certificate. This allows the worker to determine whether or not to pursue a paternity or establishment action.

IPACT also promises improved turnaround time for requested documents. Caseworkers can choose to request up to five certified copies of a birth certificate from the web-site. The request immediately appears on the WV VRO's web-site screens and can be processed immediately.

Another benefit of IPACT involves quarterly invoices. Many vital registration offices will require a payment to be sent with the request for the birth certificate. It can be a very time-consuming and difficult process to have a check cut to send with each request. IPACT records all birth certificates requested and sent to the various state workers. The WV VRO can send an invoice to the appropriate state agency once per quarter for all requests sent.

The IPACT web-site is currently being piloted in three WV counties. WV is now beginning the rollout to other states that are interested in entering into a

Continued on page 7, "West Virginia"

PS 0130 2

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Inside

Child Support for Children on TANF.....3
Collaborating to Empower Fathers.....4

New York State Partnership for Children

The goal of New York State's "Partnership for Children" initiative was to educate New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) inmate counselors regarding the continued responsibilities of incarcerated non-custodial parents to their children during their periods of incarceration.

The initial stage in the initiative was to educate DOCS counselors about the services provided by child support offices, and about how they could assist incarcerated parents.

The initial stage in the initiative was to educate DOCS counselors about the services provided by child support offices, and about how they could assist incarcerated parents to negotiate their way through the child support and Family Court systems.

Between November and December 2001, all 800 inmate counselors in each of the 72 New York State correctional facilities were provided half-day training sessions in regional settings. Counselors were given packets of child support materials that they could order and distribute to incarcerated non-custodial parents.

Realizing that each DOCS facility has individuals at various stages of their incarcerations, the training focused on what actions should be taken at all stages of incarceration: beginning, during, just prior to release, and post-release.

Counselors were advised of the incarcerated parent's need to notify the child support agency immediately when he/she is incarcerated, as well as the procedure for assisting the incarcerated parent to complete the voluntary acknowledgement of paternity form. Other instructions given the counselors were: the process for filing *pro se* modification petitions, types of notices provided from the child support agency and Family Court, and the process for telephonic testimony.

A critical part of this initiative was to get the Department of Corrections to actively participate in this initiative. DOCS took responsibility for scheduling the training in each of the various locations and mandating that counselors attend.□

Contact: Monique Rabideau, Coordinator of Community Outreach, NYS Division of Child Support Enforcement, 40 North Pearl Street – 13C, Albany, NY 12243. E-mail aw1700@dfa.state.ny.us

Wyoming Success Story

By: Wendy Gray

The Fourth Judicial District in Wyoming reports success on a Multi-state FIDM it received on an account totaling $18,000.

The Fourth Judicial District sent the federal notice of lien and notice of levy, and received $13,000 to cover the entire arrears amount owed by the non-custodial parent.

In addition, the Fourth Judicial District was able to get the District Court to issue an order that required the remaining amount in the account to be turned over to the Clerk of the District Court as security to guarantee that support payments are made in the future. This means that any month the non-custodial parent does not make a payment, or makes less than a full payment, the Clerk of the District Court office can make up the difference out of the security amount.□

Wendy Gray, HHS, OCSE's Office of Automation and Program Operations.

2002 Conference and Events Calendar

Child Support for Children on TANF

By: Jan Rothstein

An Office of Inspector General (OIG) report issued in February 2002, entitled, "Child Support for Children on TANF," examined the alignment of child support orders with the earnings of non-custodial parents who have children on TANF and the relationship of this alignment with compliance with the support order. The report found that the most effective way to achieve both immediate and long-term child support payments for children on TANF was to set realistic support orders that closely relate to the non-custodial parent's earnings. The report found that setting a support order too high was likely to have a negative effect on payment compliance with little improvement over time.

The report found that non-custodial parents with poor earnings and high amounts of retroactive support ordered tended to have poorer rates of compliance with their support orders.

The OIG followed a group of 270 low-income non-custodial parents and examined four years of earnings data and compliance with their support orders.

The OIG found that "over half of our non-custodial parents with children on TANF had reported earnings below the poverty line." Another finding was that support orders for these low-income parents "represent 69 percent of their reported earnings." Additionally, the report found that non-custodial parents with poor earnings and high amounts of retroactive support ordered tended to have poorer rates of compliance with their support orders. Non-custodial parents with better earnings and lower retroactive support amounts tended to have better rates of compliance with their support orders.

The study concludes that setting realistic support orders "would likely result in increasing child support payments."

The study concludes that setting realistic support orders "would likely result in increasing child support payments."

OCSE concurs with the report's findings and urges States to examine their policies used in the establishment of child support orders for low-income non-custodial parents. States may want to look at PIQ-00-03 that clarified the flexibility that exists under current law to forgive arrears owed to the State, enumerated the steps States can take to limit the number of "default" cases in which the obligor's income is imputed and encouraged States to help low-income non-custodial parents by using case management techniques and by training staff to refer non-paying obligors to appropriate services. States can also collaborate with Welfare-to-Work grantees in their State to get needed services to low-income non-custodial parents. □

Jan Rothstein is the OIG-GAO Liaison for the Technical Assistance Branch of the Division of State, Tribal, and Local Assistance.

Collaborating to Empower Fathers

By: Lois Rakov

Chicago's first snow of the year couldn't keep some enthusiastic young fathers from a special Fathers and Families Forum. The men began arriving early, volunteering to help with logistics, eager to learn about their role as fathers in the lives of their children.

The forum was organized by the Illinois Child Support, Head Start, Child Care Collaboration Project funded by OCSE. Chicago's three largest Head Start Grantees collaborated with the Division of Child Support Enforcement to plan the event. Staffs and parents decided on the workshop topics and speakers.

The involvement of both parents in the financial and emotional support of their children was emphasized.

Enlisting the Erikson Institute as a co-sponsor ensured the forum's success of securing top-notch presenters and speakers. An independent institution of higher learning in Illinois, Erikson focuses exclusively on early childhood development education and works directly with community agencies in efforts to improve children's lives. The forum thus provided opportunity for Head Start parents to participate in early childhood education workshops conducted by the Erikson Institute.

In the forum's keynote address, Dr. R. Gatson, Head of Developmental/Behavior Pediatrics at Cook County Hospital, remarked, "I tell my patients' parents that often they can throw away the medications for hyperactivity when mom and dad come to school, sit in the classroom and are involved."

The forum included twelve workshops ranging from "Read It to Me Again: Helping Children Become Excited About Reading" to "Living Apart: Keeping Communications With Father." Exhibits and videos provided information and programs of interest to fathers and families.

The involvement of both parents in the financial and emotional support of their children was emphasized throughout the day.

Participants received books stressing the importance of fathers' presence in the lives of their children, including, "In Daddy's Arms I am Tall," and "Day's Work." The Brookfield Zoo and the Chicago Children's Museum contributed free passes to all the fathers so they could accompany their children.

Some 150 men attended the forum and enthusiastically participated in the day's many events. They were predominantly fathers of Head Start and Early Head Start children as well as Head Start Male Involvement staff. The reaction of these young fathers was summed up best by one of them: "Today was the best day I've had in a long time. I really learned about my child and how I can help her grow."

All the men went home wearing "Fathers Matter" t-shirts, feeling good about what they had learned and looking forward to putting new parenting skills into practice.□

Lois Rakov, a member of the Illinois Division of Child Support Enforcement, coordinated the Child Support, Head Start, Child Care Collaboration Grant.

National Youth Summit

Washington, DC Hilton, June 26th-28th, 2002

HHS, in collaboration with other departments and agencies is hosting a National Youth Summit here from June 26-28, 2002. The event will feature prominent speakers and youth speakers and highlight "best practices" or good models of positive youth development. Four tracks of workshops will address the needs of youth in the following areas: 1) Supportive Families and Communities; 2) Safe and Healthy Lives; 3) Economic Self-Sufficiency and Success; and 4) Settings and Opportunities for Development and Service. For more information and to register, see the WEB site at: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fysb/summit.html□

Register Early! Only 1500 spaces are available.

Regional Child Support Enforcement Training Liaisons

OCSE provides numerous training opportunities to the Nation's child support community. Please contact your Regional Training Liaison listed below for more information.

I Carol Monteiro (617) 565-2462
cmonteiro@acf.dhhs.gov

II Aracelis Alvarez (212) 264-2890, Ext. 124
aalvarez@acf.dhhs.gov

III John Clark (215) 861-4067
jclark@acf.dhhs.gov

IV Ann Russell (404) 562-2960
arussell@acf.dhhs.gov

V Ed Donoghue (312) 353-4239
edonoghue@acf.dhhs.gov

VI Mae Rowlet (214) 767-8072
mrowlett@acf.dhhs.gov

VII Carol Downs-Witcraft (816) 426-3981, Ext. 156
cwitcraft@acf.dhhs.gov

VIII Karen Young (303) 844-3100, Ext. 396
kyoung@acf.dhhs.gov

IX Dossie Terrell (415) 437-8455
dterrell@acf.dhhs.gov

X Linda Gillett (206) 615-2552, Ext. 3047
lgillett@acf.dhhs.gov

2002 Conference and Events Calendar

May

14-16 - *Seventh Annual Bi-Regional Interstate Task Force Conference* (Regions IX and X), Office of the California Attorney General, Sacramento, CA, Cher Price, (916) 464-5227, Invitation Only.

14-16 - *ACF West Central Hub Conference Outreach to Faith-Based and Community Organizations "Renewing Our Commitment"*, Sheraton New Orleans, New Orleans, LA, Mae Frances Rowlett, (214) 767-8072.

20-22 - *Office of Child Support Enforcement OCSE) Tribal Grantees Meeting,* Crystal City Courtyard by Marriott, Arlington, VA, Kenneth Ryan, (202) 401-5128.

29-31 - *Indiana Child Support Training Conference* Indianapolis, Marriott East at Shadeland, Indianapolis, IN, Patti Perkins, (317) 232-4922.

June

2-5 - *Eastern Domestic Relations Association of Pennsylvania Annual Conference,* Sheraton Inn, Bucks County, Langhorne, PA, Jeannette Bowers, (717) 299-8145 or 299-8138.

2-6 - *ACF/State Information Systems Meeting* ,Sheraton Centre Hotel, Salt Lake City, UT, Robin Rushton, (202) 690-1244, Invitation Only.

9-12 - *Colorado Family Support Council Annual Training Conference,* Holiday Inn DIA, Denver, CO, Dee Price-Sanders, (720) 947-5000.

10-11 - *The National Fatherhood Initiatives Fifth Annual Summit on Fatherhood,* Riverwalk Hyatt Hotel, San Antonio, TX, Elaine Sherman, (301) 948-0599.

20 - *National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Child Support Tele-Talk Broadcast: Case Closure Regulations and Procedures,* Tara McFarlane, (202) 624-8180.

August

4-8 - *National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) 51st Annual Conference and Exposition,* Hilton Riverside, New Orleans, LA, Tara McFarlane, (202) 624-8180.

8 - *Southwest Regional Conference IV-D Directors Roundtable,* Hilton Riverside New Orleans, LA, Lisa Woodruff-White or Janet Barnes,(225) 342-4780.

Date to be announced *Georgia Child Support Enforcement Training Conference*, TBA, Gail Moon,(404) 657-3866.

September

17-20 - *Missouri Child Support Enforcement Association (MCSEA)* (25th Anniversary) Holiday Inn, Executive Center, Columbia, MO, Ken Palermo, (636) 797-9852.

19 - *National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Child Support Tele-Talk Broadcast: Interpreting Tax Returns,* Tara McFarlane, (202) 624-8180.

23-25 - *12th National Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) Training Conference,* Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Arlington, VA, Bertha J. Hammett, (202) 401-5292.

24-27 - *Nebraska Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) 21st Annual Training Conference,* Midtown Holiday Inn, Grand Island, NE, Andi Clark, (402) 471-7384.

October

13-17 - *Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council (WICSEC) 19th Annual Training Conference,* Marriott Downtown, Portland, OR, Cheri Breitenstein, (503) 945-6158.□

Child Support Children First

West Virginia

Continued from page 1

cooperative agreement to access the web-site.

The pilot project has shown other benefits that will be received once it is fully implemented. For example, caseworkers will be able to resolve IV-A referrals that do not have complete information on the mother, father and child(ren), to accurately code the child(ren)'s paternity status in the child support system, and to identify Social Security numbers for all participants.

Cooperation between the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement and the Vital Registration Office has been a key factor in the success of this project.

Cooperation between the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement and the Vital Registration Office has been a key factor in the success of this project. The State Registrar was also included as a valued member of the project staff from the beginning.

A high level of system security is of the essence. User ID and secure passwords are a must. Restrictions on the data that can be accessed must be in place. These were all issues discussed in detail during the design phase and decisions were made with the advice and approval of the WV VRO.

Child support workers in other states, through cooperative agreements with those states, can access this information. They are assigned secure User IDs and passwords to enable access to the site. Each state must designate a Database Administrator who is responsible for obtaining and maintaining User IDs for workers in its respective state.

If your state or county (if CSE program is funded through a local county) staff would like to be authorized to access IPACT, please contact Jim Dingeldine at jimdingeldine@wvdhhr.org or (304)558-3582. Your state or county will be required to enter into a cooperative agreement with the WV BCSE.□

2002 HHS Poverty Guidelines

One Version of the [U.S.] Federal Poverty Measure

There are two slightly different versions of the Federal poverty measure:

- The poverty thresholds, and
- The poverty guidelines.

Poverty thresholds, which are updated each year by the Census Bureau, are the original versions of the Federal poverty measure. The thresholds are used mainly for statistical purposes—for instance, preparing estimates of the number of Americans in poverty each year.

The poverty guidelines comprise the other version of the Federal poverty measure. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issues them each year in the *Federal Register*. The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds and are used in determining financial eligibility for certain Federal programs. □

Size of Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	$ 8,860	$11,080	$10,200
2	11,940	14,930	13,740
3	15,020	18,780	17,280
4	18,100	22,630	20,820
5	21,180	26,480	24,360
6	24,260	30,330	27,900
7	27,340	34,180	31,440
8	30,420	38,030	34,980
For each additional person, add	3,080	3,850	3,540

Poverty Guidelines per family size

Source: *Federal Register*: February 14, 2002 (Volume 67, Number 31).

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement
Division of Consumer Services
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CHAMPAGNE IL 61820

Child Support Report

DOL Requests Comments on WIA and TANF Connections

The Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration is soliciting comments on reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Linkages with the TANF program. Congress is scheduled to take up TANF reauthorization in 2002 and WIA in 2003. As a result, this notice invites public comments on two key reauthorization issues: What changes the administration should propose for WIA and how linkages between TANF and WIA can be improved. The deadline for comments is June 30, 2002. Comments related to the linkage of Title I of WIA and TANF, however, should be submitted as soon as possible.

Submit by mail to WIA/TANF Reauthorization, Attn: Maria Kniesler Flynn, Employment and Training Administration, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Room S-4231, Washington, DC 20210, or FAX to (202) 693-3015, or send via email to reauthorization@doleta.gov.

We strongly encourage you to consider the potential benefit to custodial and/or noncustodial parents.☐

Source: *Federal Register,* Vol. 67 No. 40.

Child Support Report
Vol. XXIV, No. 4
April 2002

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If you have enjoyed this issue of ***Child Support Report,*** *please pass it on to a co-worker or friend.*

Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement Vol. XXIV, No. 5, May 2002

Summary of: "Child Support Reforms in PRWORA: Initial Impacts"

By: Elaine Sorensen and Helen Oliver

A recent report published by the Urban Institute assesses the impact of four child support reforms on child support order establishment and collections. The four provisions, examined in "Child Support Reforms in PRWORA: Initial Impacts" by Elaine Sorensen and Helen Oliver, were all created or extended by the 1996 welfare reform law. Using data from the 1997 and 1999 National Survey of America's Families, the report finds that two of the reforms, new hire directories and improved paternity establishment procedures, have contributed to improved child support outcomes. Although the impact of the other two reforms — automated child support systems and license revocation laws — did not reach statistical significance, they too were positive. Low and middle-income families headed by a never-married mother have been the ones to benefit from these reforms, offering some encouraging news for a group that has received little child support in the past.

Other findings from the report include:

In 1999, 17.9 million children lived with their mother while their father lived elsewhere. These children were about twice as likely to be poor than all children combined. Thirty percent of these children had a mother who had never married, and of these children over half were poor.

The report finds that two of the reforms, new hire directories and improved paternity establishment procedures, have contributed to improved child support outcomes.

Between 1997 and 1999, the poverty rate among children with a nonresident father declined three percentage points, from 41% to 38%, a statistically significant decline. Among never-married mothers, poverty rates also declined significantly, from 59% to 54%.

On the other hand, children with a nonresident father did not experience significant improvements between 1997 and 1999 in the percent with an order, the percent receiving some child support under an order, or the percent receiving all ordered child

Continued on page 7, "Sorenson"

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Inside

"Community Meeting" at ERICSA.....3
"Big Ten" States Hold Initial Meeting.....6

Customer Service in Difficult Situations

By: Michell D. Butler

On March 21, 2002, Sue Bailey, Linda Olson, Theresa Olson and Anne-Marie Yeates led a discussion that covered a broad range of customer service issues. Chief among the issues discussed was why child support customers complain. Five major reasons were given: a feeling that they are not being heard, broken promises, rudeness, a "nothing can be done about it" attitude, and what can appear as an indifference to the customer's problem. The discussion took place on an NCSEA Tele-Talk.

A number of important values in customer service were highlighted during the discussion. Acceptance, defined as the ability to relate to the customer, was listed, along with tolerance, defined as treating people fairly. Other critical values on the list were: avoiding stereotypes, allowing the customer to participate in decision-making, insuring that confidentiality will be maintained, and assuring that information gathered will not be used in an irresponsible manner.

Principles of effective communication were also addressed. Simple things like confirming what has been said, paraphrasing, sharing reflections, and making eye contact, were all held up as necessary components of any meaningful communication.

The presenters shared some "DOs" for handling difficult customers. To keep any exchange from escalating, professionalism should be maintained. This includes child support workers being aware of their own facial expressions, posture, and tone of voice. It also includes trying to remain empathetic and avoiding engaging in power struggles of any kind – knowing when to walk away.

In short, treat the customer as you would want to be treated, doing everything possible to understand the customer's concerns, and always be committed to providing excellent service. Try to remember, when being criticized, hard as it is, not to internalize the customer's frustration. Keep saying to yourself, "This is really not about me." And never be afraid to utter the simple phrase, "I made a mistake."

In short, treat the customer as you would want to be treated, doing everything possible to understand the customer's concerns, and always be committed to providing excellent service.

Sue Bailey is currently a consultant with wide-ranging child support experience in the State of Washington; Linda Olson is the Supervisor for Child Support in the Dakota County Collection Services Unit in Minnesota; Theresa Olson is the Supervisor for Child Support in the Dakota County Community Service Department in Minnesota; Anne-Marie Yeates is an Education Specialist with the New York State Division of Child Support Enforcement.□

Michell Butler is a Program Information Resource Specialist in the Division of Consumer Services.

Texas Certified

The "Texas Child Support Enforcement System (TXCSES)" was certified as meeting the automation requirements of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) on April 18. Texas is the 10th State to be PRWORA certified.□

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State and National Child Support Leaders Address "Community Meeting" at ERICSA

In the opening plenary of ERICSA's 39th Annual Training Conference and Exposition, meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, April 29, 2002, OCSE's Commissioner, Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, and Pauline Burton, Colorado IV-D Director and President of the National Council of Child Support Directors, shared the stage. The conference was billed as a "community meeting" designed to model the theme, "Unity in the Community: Coming Together for Families." Both Commissioner Heller and President Burton stressed the importance of combining our efforts in support of children and families.

Dr. Heller began by emphasizing the need to see child support as something more than just a check-off on a TANF eligibility form. Child support is more than that, the Commissioner said. Research has shown it to be an important source of income to families.

Commissioner Heller also emphasized her conviction that customer service must be front and center of all that we do, which, for her, means, "seeing things from the customer's point of view."

Looking at things from the customer's point of view, the Commissioner noted, might help us understand why – even with all of our successes – "the program is so widely perceived as failing our clients." With a 60 percent increase in collections over the past five years and the doubling of the number of cases with a collection, nearly 2/3 of our cases have orders and over 2/3 of our orders have collections. But if you do the math – 2/3 times 2/3 = 4/9 — what this means, Commissioner Heller stated, from the customer's point of view, is that less than one half of those who ask us for help get any.

Dr. Heller was quick to say that this does not mean we have failed. Quite the contrary. The child support program has made remarkable progress – virtually reinvented itself. What this seems to mean is that the customers are not yet fully getting the benefits of this "automation switch over" (like that which occurred with the public when the banking industry made its switch over), and we need to make sure that we are using, to the fullest extent possible, the automation tools available.

Other issues covered by Commissioner Heller were: our definition of "customer" must be expanded to include grandparents, step-parents, and the children themselves; collection and distribution are not the same thing; and we need to improve our performance in interstate cases.

President Pauline Burton, speaking from the states' perspective, began by listing what IV-D Directors are "worrying about." She listed such things as budget constraints, succession planning as retirements increase, staff turnovers and the need for training, evaluating automation enhancements, and getting all states certified.

She then moved to a discussion of "new directions" – where the child support program is headed. Under the heading of "who we serve," President Burton noted the increases in the non-TANF caseload. "What we do" – another topic – stressed such issues as moving from cost recovery to a program that seeks to assure financial support of children. "How we serve," her third topic, was about new technologies, interstate case processing, and more collaboration with other government programs and community organizations.

Participants spoke of the "community meeting" as having been just that: a time for frank and honest dialogue, broad audience participation, good questions asked and creative ideas shared. Commissioner Heller noted that the discussion indicated that people had been working hard on the issues that confront the child support community.□

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North Carolina Child Support Enforcement's New eChildSupport Web Site

By: Beth Amos

North Carolina's Office of Child Support Enforcement has a new web site called "eChildSupport."

When visiting the eChildSupport web site, the Automated Collections and Tracking System (ACTS) participant can obtain all the information available from the Customer Service Center's Voice Response Unit. The web site will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In order to obtain case information, participants must go through an on-line registration process to validate that they are ACTS participants. Once validated, individuals will be given user ID's and passwords. Case information that can be accessed by participants includes: case status, scheduled appointments, court hearings, noncustodial parent's payments received or custodial parent's payments disbursed, ordered support amounts, and arrears balances.

Participants may also request payment histories, payment coupons or authorizations for direct deposit.

Participants may also request payment histories, payment coupons or authorizations for direct deposit. Non IV-D participants will be limited to information about payments and must contact the clerk of court for other information.

Another feature that individuals can access is an on-line version of the Child Support Guidelines. This interactive feature will allow the user to plug in the information necessary to calculate and display the suggested monthly support obligation. Also included for the general public is contact and location information on local child support enforcement offices and Clerks of Court Offices, including a "map it" feature giving directions to the offices.

Child Support Enforcement customers who call the Voice Response Unit at the Customer Service Center receive a message about the availability of the new eChildSupport web site and the address. Plans are underway to develop a system to automatically distribute and store the numerous e-mail feedback requests received by the Central Office Client Service staff before further publicizing the site. Since the site went live March 1, 2002, over 40,000 individuals have accessed it. More than 11,000 ACTS participants have registered to access their case information. Each day, an average of 1,026 users access the site.

Feedback has been positive. One user commented: "Just wanted to send a GOOD JOB e-mail to your organization. This web site is fantastic! I used to call the local office for child support information; then I called your 1-800 #, which was an improvement; and now you have this web site...which is a *huge* improvement. It is great to check this site rather than call your office or call my bank to check on direct deposit dates and amounts. Thanks!!!!!!!!!!"

The site may be accessed at "www.ncchildsupport.com."□

Beth Amos is the Program Manager for System User Support for the North Carolina CSE Central Office System User Support Unit. (919) 212-4160.

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West Virginia's 24/7 Interactive Voice Response System

West Virginia's 24/7 Interactive Voice Response system (IVR) has proven to be extremely popular. During calendar year 2001, over one million calls were received. Prior to implementation of the IVR, the Bureau's Customer Service Unit received approximately 25,000 to 30,000 calls per month.

The IVR allows customers to access information about the services provided by the State's Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (Bureau). In addition to service information, callers can also obtain the phone numbers of local Child Support Enforcement offices.

Customers who have cases with the Bureau can find specific payment information related to their cases by using their Social Security and Personal Identification Numbers.

Customers who have cases with the Bureau can find specific payment information related to their cases by using their Social Security and Personal Identification Numbers.

For those customers who prefer to speak directly with a person, or who have case-specific questions, Customer Service representatives are available Monday through Friday during business hours. These representatives are also available for those persons who do not have touch-tone phones.

Other options: callers can be connected to the Bureau's Employer Relations Unit and receive automated information about income withholdings and new hires. Payment information on the IVR is updated daily.

The IVR system enables the Bureau to provide better and more efficient service to its customers, who are non-custodial as well as custodial parents.

This project is the result of a great deal of effort on the part of the Bureau staff. The script and call flow were designed and tested by the staff. Due to the staff's inexperience in this area, the project took much longer than expected. Since the system was not designed to allow for the State staff to update, it has been necessary to work through the vendor when changes have occurred in law and policy.

The IVR system enables the Bureau to provide better and more efficient service to its customers, who are non-custodial as well as custodial parents.

For information, contact Sue Arthur Grimes, Director of Central Operations, Bureau for Child Support Enforcement, sgrimes@wvdhhr.org, (304) 558-3780.□

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"Big Ten" States Hold Initial Meeting In San Antonio, Texas

By: Dan Fascione

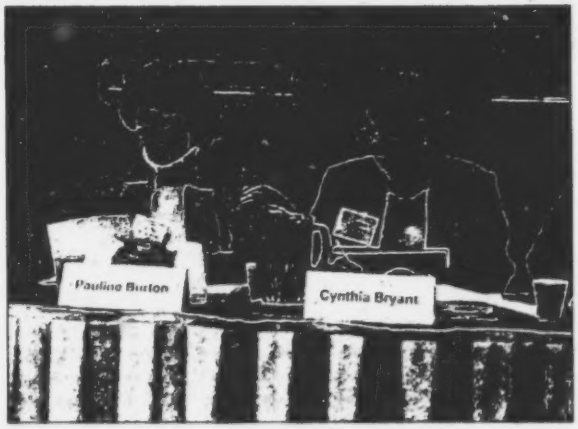
In April, Office of Child Support Enforcement Commissioner Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, convened the IV-D Directors of the largest states in San Antonio, Texas, for a dialogue on best methods to improve outcomes. In her opening remarks, Commissioner Heller emphasized the importance of making "operational issues" the focus of the meeting. In short, Dr. Heller said, "We need a work plan – something that says 'here's what we need to do and how we are going to do it.'"

The states invited were California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin, which together accounted for nearly 60% of the child support distributed last year to America's children and families.

The focus of the "conversation" was on what can be done – at the Federal and State levels – to make a difference in the child support program.

The "working conversation" on improving the child support program covered a variety of interstate issues: enhanced use of Federal Parent Locator Service data, Financial Institution Data Matching, swifter distribution of collections, the special challenges facing large urban jurisdictions, the need for targeting non-paying cases for enforcement actions, improving customer services, the impact of employment and training, fatherhood, and family responsibility programs for non-custodial parents.

The focus was on what can be done — at the Federal and State levels — to make a difference in the child support program, that would result in increased collections, improved services, and the strengthening of families. A number of working groups were formed to address the recommendations developed at the meeting.



Pauline Burton and Cynthia Bryant providing input to discussions.

Joining the discussions were key interstate staff from the Big Ten states, OCSE national and regional staff, and Pauline Burton, the IV-D Director in Colorado and President of the National Council of Child Support Directors. The meeting also included a joint session with the Federal/State Interstate Reform Initiative group, underscoring the importance of interstate issues in program improvement.

Site visits to the Texas Customer Service Call Center, which also houses the state's Financial Institution Data Match operations, and to the Texas State Disbursement Unit were an integral part of the meeting, as was a real-time demonstration of the web-based customer service functions in Texas, New Mexico, Kansas and Virginia.

Helpful, also, was the sharing of some "best prac-

Child Support Children First

tices." Cynthia Bryant, IV-D Director of Texas, reported that, under Texas law, medical support is included in all orders, and that through outreach efforts, aggressive data matching, and an effective public/private partnership, 200,000 kids were insured and significant cost savings realized. Margot Bean, New York IV-D Director, described plans to utilize PC-based Real-time Distance Learning Training for local district staff. Pauline Burton indicated that Colorado is promoting both Direct Deposit to its SDU and the use of Stored Value Cards for custodial parents. These were just a few of the ideas exchanged.

The Big Ten Initiative, with 11 state members (following the collegiate sports conference model), reflects an expansion of the Big 8 to include those states in the top nine rankings on either total distributed collections or total caseload for Federal fiscal years 2000 and 2001. These states are responsible for nearly 60% of the national caseload, and six of them distributed over $1 billion each in collections in FY02.

While these Big 10 states may account for a large share of both caseloads and collections, there was a clear recognition among all those who participated in the conversations in San Antonio that where the support of children is concerned, the best efforts of all states – regardless of size – are required. □

Dan Fascione is Director of the Big 10 Initiative.

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Continued from page 1

support. However, children with a never-married mother and a family income under 300 percent of the poverty threshold gained significantly in each of these three measures. Still, only 41 percent of these children had a support order (a 5 percentage point increase), 56 percent received some ordered child support (a 10 percentage point increase), and 36 percent received all ordered child support (a 10 percentage point increase).

The percent of low-and middle-income children with a never-married mother who received the full amount of their child support order increased 11 percentage points in states that implemented new hire directories. This effect remained significant after controlling for other factors, thus suggesting that new hire directories have been effective at securing child support through wage withholding.

Children with a never-married mother and family income under 300 percent of poverty were significantly more likely to have a child support order in 1999 in states that increased their paternity establishment percentage. Although this percentage captures a range of specific policies, this result indicates that paternity establishment efforts are having the intended effects on their target population.

States that automated their child support systems experienced a 12 percentage point increase in the rate of child support receipt among children with a never-married mother under 300 percent of poverty. However, these gains disappeared when the authors controlled for other demographic characteristics. Similarly, license revocation policies were associated with a 7 percentage point increase for this population but did not stand up to statistical scrutiny.

For copies, go to www.urban.org□

Elaine Sorensen is Principle Research Associate, Urban Institute, and Helen Oliver is Research Associate, Urban Institute.

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State Agencies Working Together on Behalf of Children

The Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) and the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), along with information systems staff from both agencies, have initiated a joint project to streamline existing employment intercept processes through automation.

Federal and State regulations allow DCSE to intercept a portion of unemployment insurance payments from parents who owe child support.

This process, which has existed since 1982, is currently carried out manually, with paper documents forwarded to VEC. VEC staff then enters the information into their automated system.

The goal of this joint project is to eliminate the paper and the data entry process, while ensuring that all potential collections are made on behalf of children who are owed child support. ☐

Reprinted from Virginia's, "The Support," March 2002.

Child Support Report
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Child Support Report is a publication of the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services.

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement Vol. XXIV, No. 6, June 2002

New York State Courts And Division Of Child Support Enforcement: A Partnership For Success

By: Peter Passidomo

Governor George Pataki announced in a New York Times article that for the seventh year in a row, child support collections in New York hit a record number. During 2001, $1.29 billion was collected from parents. That represented another substantial increase as collections exceeded $1 billion for the third year in a row.

Increases in child support collections like these are no accident. Rather, they are in large part a product of successful collaboration between the New York State Court System and New York State's Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE). This collaboration began with the Chief Judge of New York, Judith Kaye, and Governor Pataki, through his Commissioner of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Brian Wing. Chief Judge Kaye and Commissioner Wing met five years ago to establish a joint task force to design a more efficient system for processing child support cases. The result was a new, expedited support procedure currently in place in the Manhattan Family Court. Over the past five years, representatives from the New York City Family Court, DCSE, and the NYC Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) have met every month to address the many common issues shared by the two branches of government.

In New York, all petitions to establish support are heard in Family Court by Hearing Examiners, who establish and modify support amounts. The 120 Hearing Examiners hear and act on approximately one-half of all of the petitions filed in New York State Family Court. Court action is also required for certain types of enforcement remedies, such as suspension of professional licenses and incarceration of non-custodial parents for contempt of court. Child Support Enforcement's (CSE'S) primary responsibility is collecting and enforcing the support amount ordered by the court in cases involving federally mandated Title IV-D child support. However, CSE may administratively increase the support amount by a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) under certain circumstances. CSE utilizes a vast array of enforcement techniques, including: income execution, attachment of state and federal tax refunds, suspension of driver's licenses, and bank account seizures.

The court and DCSE have adopted programs designed to make the child support system more effective in collecting court-ordered child support from

Continued on page 7, "NY Courts and OCSE"

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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Office of Child Support Enforcement

Inside

The Tribal CSE program....4
Dr. Heller Addresses Fatherhood Conference....6

Indiana Employers Use Internet to Pay Online

The Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) of Indiana recently unveiled its "speedy new online service" for employers to use in submitting child support payments to the State central collection unit.

FSSA Secretary John Hamilton noted that so far more than 130 employers in 40 Indiana counties use the system, which the State piloted last summer. The web-based payment service helps keep employees in compliance with court orders for child support payroll withholding and the employers save on postage and handling. The Indiana Support Enforcement Tracking System (ISETS) then relays the payments to custodial parents. Employers have submitted more than $1.7 million in child support payments online since they began using the website.

One Indiana employer praises this new system. "We've been very pleased with sending our people's child support through the website," said Terry W. Smith, CEO of Rock Industries, Inc. "The system is fast, efficient and dependable, and it eliminates costs we used to incur in using checks." Employers access the service through a secure site that requires a user name and password, which can be designated by FSSA's Child Support Bureau.

"This website is an all-around winner," Secretary Hamilton said. "Besides the savings for employers, it helps noncustodial parents meet their obligations to their kids. Taxpayers save because FSSA's staff needn't gather and manually process the checks."

Indiana is one of the leaders in providing this service. The states of Washington, Michigan, and Nebraska have also implemented web-based services within the last year. Indiana's new legislation, which takes effect July 1st, will require employers with more than one payment and who have 50 or more employees to remit their child support payments electronically.

For more information, contact Michele Swain, Family and Social Services Administration, (317) 233-2202, mswain@fssa.state.in.us. □

Technology Pay-offs

By: Wendy Gray

Texas recently experienced record-breaking success with its Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM) unit. Here are three examples that add up to substantial financial support for children.

In the first case, the non-custodial parent (NCP), who lives in Michigan, had never paid child support. Texas was considering filing a criminal non-support case against him. However, when they got a "hit" on his financial accounts, they were able to get a $90,000 settlement and Texas was able to close the case.

In the second scenario, the NCP received a $4.1 million personal injury settlement in January 1998 but still had not paid any child support. When Texas put a lien on a matched account for $18,000, the financial institution informed the state that this person held other accounts that totaled over $4 million. Texas was able to collect the full arrears of $136,000.

And, most impressive: Texas filed a lien against an NCP who had three separate child support cases in which arrears totaled $264,108. This particular NCP had never made payments on any of the three cases. Through FIDM, Texas had proof of the NCP's ability to pay. After numerous communications with the NCP and his attorneys, the NCP signed an agreement for $200,000 to be disbursed among the three CPs. □

Wendy Gray, HHS, OCSE's Office of Automation and Program Operations.

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OCSE and DFAS Work Together on Wage-Withholding Order Endeavor: The KIDS 1st Program

Tired of snail mail? Do you want an efficient and reliable method of processing military wage-withholding orders? Try switching to the KIDS 1st Program! State Child Support Enforcement (CSE) agencies now have the opportunity to electronically send wage-withholding orders for military and civilian DOD personnel working in the United States and overseas to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS).

DFAS and the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) are working in tandem to bring you an up-to-date electronic method for transferring and processing wage-withholding orders. Get rid of all that paper - - South Dakota did! South Dakota piloted the KIDS 1st batch process last year and successfully placed it into production.

How exactly does this new batch processing application work? First, state CSE agencies create wage-withholding records formatted according to DFAS specifications and record layout. (The DFAS record layout is consistent with the universal wage withholding form issued by OCSE.) The OCSE Network then retrieves files containing records from the states' automated CSE systems and forwards them to DFAS for processing. At present, South Dakota is using this batch processing to send wage-withholdings to DOD.

Imagine the following benefits for your IV-D agency:

- Fewer chances for errors due to multiple manual data entries.
- Reduced processing time and postal cost by eliminating mail handling.
- Automated generation of wage withholding order on CSE systems.
- Immediate processing of termination orders, no legal review required. Results: reduced costs for returned checks and reduced calls from non-custodial parents confirming termination.

For more information about this process, contact Bonnie Walters at Bonnie.Walters@DFAS.MIL or 216-522-5435 Ext. 41650 or the CSENet 2000 Service Desk at CSENet.2000@lmco.com or 1-800-258-2736. Testing and additional end-user support services are available to all interested states.

DFAS Kids 1st batch processing-related resource material is found in the OCSE Resource Library at: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/stsys/tab99.htm#dfas. The OCSE transmission specifications for DFAS files can be found at: http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/newhire/relmgt.htm. □

Notice

If you would like to submit an article for possible publication in the Child Support Report, please contact Tom Starnes at (202) 401-5536 or tstarnes@acf.hhs.gov.

The Tribal Child Support Enforcement Program

By: Kenneth Ryan

In 1996, with the passage of the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), Congress added Section 455f to the Social Security Act, which authorizes direct federal funding " . . .to an Indian tribe or tribal organization that demonstrates . . .that it has the capacity to operate a child support enforcement program . . . ." Prior to 1996, though some of the 557 American Indian tribes had child support enforcement written into their legal codes and tribal courts routinely handled child support cases, there were no formally established tribal child support enforcement programs.

The Office of Child Support Enforcement first funded eight grantees in 1999 under the Special Improvement Project (SIP) Grants Program to develop fully operational child support programs. Since 2001, seven tribal child support enforcement programs have been funded under the Interim Final Rule that was written to allow tribes to implement the direct funding program.

The Interim Rule enables Tribes and Tribal organizations that currently operate comprehensive Child Support Enforcement programs to apply directly to OCSE for Federal funding without having to wait for the publication of the Final Rule which should be published either late this year or early in 2003.

The first seven direct child support funding grants awarded to Tribes were to previous SIP grantees. The funded Tribal programs are culturally and geographically diverse, and they represent a broad cross-section of tribes and tribal organizations in America.

The first Federally-funded OCSE grant was to the Chickasaw Tribe of Oklahoma. The Chickasaw grant is particullarly noteworthy because, with this funding, the Chickasaw Tribe is able to provide child support services to 32 tribes in Oklahoma. Another Indian tribe from Kansas plans to join the consortium.

The Program Director of the Chickasaw Nation Child Support Enforcement Department is Chickasaw Tribal member Jerry Sweet. The Chickasaw Tribe has developed a comprehensive program for almost a third of all Oklahoma tribes. The Tribe has a comprehensive agreement with the state of Oklahoma for many important services, including parent location, tax location and specialized computer services.

The second tribe to receive direct funding is the Sisseton-Wahpeton Tribe of Sioux Indians from South Dakota. The three remaining tribes who have received Federal funding are: The Navajo Nation, Window Rock, AZ; The Puyallup Tribe of Indians, Tacoma, WA; and the Lac Du Flambeau Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Lac Du Flambeau, WI.

The Tribal Child Support Enforcement Program is located administratively within the Division of Special Staffs (DOSS), OCSE. For more information on Tribal Programs, call (202) 690-7733.□

Kenneth Ryan is a Program Specialist with the Tribal office in the Division of Special Staffs.

March 13, 2002 Tribal Meeting
Left to right: Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller; Gary Kimble, Director, Native American/Tribal Program, and Martha Renville, Director, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe CSE program.

Improving Information-Sharing among IV-D Agencies, Tribal Organizations, and State Courts Through the Use of Automated Systems Technology

By: Nehemiah Rucker

Recognizing the crucial importance of the timely flow and exchange of information among agencies involved in child support enforcement, Congress earmarked $2,000,000 for the State Information Technology Consortium (SITC) of Herndon, Virginia, to help improve coordination between state IV-D agencies, tribal organizations, and state courts. The earmarked funds will enable the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and SITC to enter into a partnership to provide technical assistance to states working to improve child support collections through the use of automated technology.

SITC was created in 1997 as a nonprofit consortium with a primary focus of providing technical solutions to common information technology challenges facing states implementing Federal, interstate, and multi-agency programs. Over the past four years, the Consortium has successfully assisted the Federal Office of Family Assistance in meeting the information and automated systems reporting requirements of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. It is expected that SITC will be equally successful in performing similar services for the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement.

OCSE recently awarded a contract to SITC to tap this consortium's expertise and experience in implementing a project entitled "Technology for Rapid Enforcement of Collections." The project is designed to identify and apply efficient, cost-effective technologies for improved data and document management and data exchange interfaces among state child support agencies, tribal organizations, and their local courts. In addition to more timely and effective information-sharing, increased child support collections are expected to be important end products.

SITC will begin its work soon. For more information regarding this project, contact Nehemiah Rucker, OCSE Project Officer at nerucker@acf.dhhs.gov. □

SIP Grant Announcement

OCSE's Special Improvement Projects (SIP) grant announcement was published in the Federal Register on May 30, 2002, Vol. 67, No. 104. It is soliciting grants in the following six priority areas:

- Helping low-income fathers meet their child support and family responsibilities;
- Encouraging new ways to approach unwed parents to emphasize the importance of a healthy marriage to a child's well-being;
- Increasing the number of child support cases with medical coverage for children;
- Expanding the use of automation tools and best practices; and
- Improving child support services for ethnic and culturally diverse populations, tribes, and the international community, and
- Furthering the child support mission to ensure all children receive financial and medical support from both parents.

Eligible applicants include state/local IV-D and other public agencies, tribes and tribal organizations, and nonprofit organizations, including community and faith-based organizations and universities.

Deadline for applications is August 13, 2002. You may access the announcement and application kit on our web site at http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2002/news/sipp.htm or contact Jean Robinson, Staff Assistant, Division of State, Tribal and Local Assistance/OCSE, at (202) 401-5330 for a hard copy. □

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Dr. Heller Addresses Fatherhood Conference

In her address to the opening session of the 4th Annual International Fatherhood Conference sponsored by the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL) on May 28, 2002, Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, Commissioner of OCSE, began by saying, "In my job, I focus on children's well-being."

Commissioner Heller then reminded her audience that "child well-being" was the first stated goal of NPCL's Partners for Fragile Families projects, which OCSE has helped support."

It is this focus on child well-being, Commissioner Heller pointed out, that "distinguishes these projects from other fatherhood programs, . . .in which community organizing, or employment-related training, . . .become the main goals of the program. . . ." These are important goals, she was quick to say, but, "unless they have an impact on these men's duties and opportunities as fathers, . . .they're not fatherhood programs."

Building on Assistant Secretary Dr. Wade Horn's concern that some fatherhood programs "make it look too easy to be a good father on an occasional basis," Dr. Heller raised the issue of paternity establishment and marriage. "When I look at the results of the Fragile Families demonstration projects so far, I see over 900 enrollments, and only about 400 paternities established. I find that hard to understand." The Commissioner asked how the needs of children be met if their fathers aren't acknowledging that they are the fathers.

Dr. Heller addressed the historical issue of child support agencies not always being the most supportive agencies in the world - - especially for fathers who are struggling. But she noted that this is changing. She referred to this as a "cultural shift" in child support agencies all across the country - - where the word "father" is used instead of "obligor" or "defendant." And the Commissioner credited NPCL, and organizations like it, for helping to bring about this change in perspective.

Commissioner Heller also credited this "cultural shift" to judges and child support professionals "realizing that the most effective way to get child support paid is to start with more realistic child support orders . . .and even consideration of the need to modify arrears when current support is paid in some cases."

"We will work to make child support enforcement more of a tool that fathers use to help support their kids, rather that a club that drives fathers away."

Commmissioner Sherri Z Heller, Ed.D.

Dr. Heller gave the audience her pledge to keep working to "change the 'either/or' environment into an 'And' environment." She put it this way: "It shouldn't have to be a choice between paternity establishment (and court-ordered child support) or the potential for marriage and family formation. It shouldn't have to be a choice between showing up for your kids (and maybe getting picked up for achild support debt) or disappearing from your kids' lives in order to stay clear of child support enforcement. We will work to make child support enforcement more of a tool that fathers use to help support their kids, rather than a club that drives fathers away." Then she asked those who manage fatherhood programs to make a pledge - to ensure that fatherhood programs benefit children, not just non-custodial parents.

Continue on page 7, "Fatherhood"

Child Support Children First

NY Courts and OCSE

Continued from page 1

self-employed parents. Traditionally, it is more difficult to collect child support from self-employed payors since their wages cannot be garnished. In an effort to collect arrears owed by self-employed payors, as well as other non-payors, DCSE developed an agreement with the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, whose agents now assist in collecting the hard-to-collect child support arrears by collecting these monies as if they were a tax debt. This program has collected over $187 million since March 1997.

The court has vastly improved its process for the enforcement of orders against the self-employed. A new court rule was adopted that eliminates artificial barriers in cases where incarceration is being considered. The amount of time to secure an attorney is defined; hearings must take place within a short period of time; and the time for the final decision is limited. The findings of fact proposed by Hearing Examiners are uniform, facilitating review by a judge.

In New York City, the court and NYC OCSE have implemented a joint operation with court and child support staff working side by side to file petitions and offer enforcement services to litigants seeking child support. All filed petitions are sent to an "intake part" for an expedited support order, using service by priority mail with delivery confirmation and automated income information. Many of the cases are resolved in the "intake part" just three weeks after the case begins. To make the courts more accessible, a court rule was enacted to govern the procedure in telephonic hearings held in interstate and intrastate cases, and also for cases involving incarcerated individuals.

In the future, the court and DCSE plan to examine the expanded use of technology in support cases. Consideration will be given to: including on-line access to information about bank accounts, assets, income, addresses, property ownership, and credit card charges, among other information; use of electronic petitions; and the use of video-conferencing technology. However, it may be necessary to propose changes to evidence laws to ensure that this information is considered in all support hearings. This technology will be especially helpful in intrastate, interstate, and incarcerated parties' cases.

Annual comprehensive training programs are essential to ensuring effective and uniform implementation of support laws and policies. Since 1985, the court has provided an annual two-day training session for Hearing Examiners to review the law and to discuss courtroom issues and best practices. In 1999, DCSE began providing a two-day Child Support Enforcement Seminar for the Hearing Examiners. This seminar helps Hearing Examiners understand the agency's activities and provides updates to changes in the child support law.

Collections have more than doubled since the collaboration began in 1996, and although there is still a lot of work to do, a lot has been accomplished and learned. Consistent with the achievements made and the independent role of the courts, we will continue to collaborate on as many issues as we can in order to support more effectively the children of New York State.□

Peter Passidomo is the Chief Court Attorney, New York City Family Court.

Fatherhood

Continued from page 6

The Commissioner concluded her remarks with a reminder that child support and groups like NPCL share a common goal. Child support's main emphasis may be the economic security of the homes where children are being raised. NPCL's primary goal may be to focus on "many needs of non-custodial parents, including their skills and their hurt and their anger." But ultimately, our goals are the same: "It's all for the kids.".□

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September 23-25, 2002

Contact Bertha Hammett at OCSE's National Training Center for additional information (202) 401-5292 or bhammett@acf.hhs.gov

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement **Vol. XXIV, No. 7, July 2002**

Pay Your Child Support – Will Travel:

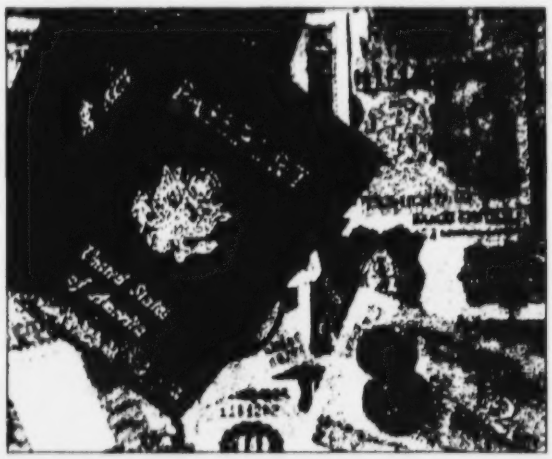
Passport Denial Success Stories

The Passport Denial Program, which is operated as part of the Federal Offset Program, is designed to help states enforce the child support obligations of the most egregious delinquent obligors. Under the program, non-custodial parents certified by a state as having arrearages exceeding $5,000 are submitted by OCSE to the Department of State (DoS), which "flags" their names and denies them U.S. passports upon application or the use of a passport service. The state can then remove their names from the program once the child support has been paid or appropriate arrangements have been made to satisfy the debt.

The program was implemented jointly by OCSE and DoS in June of 1998. Currently, an average of 60 passports per day are denied, up from 30 to 40 at the start of the program. Since June of 1998, the caseload has grown from two million to over three million cases.

Since its inception, this program has collected over $14 million in lump-sum payments. Significantly, this total does not include those obligors who set up payment plans and wage withholding as a result of being submitted for passport denial and represents only the amount that states voluntarily report.

Traveling overseas for employment purposes typically garners large lump-sum payments. Quite a few work-related payments have been made to California. An obligor working in Bahrain came back to the U.S. for vacation. While he was here, his passport expired. He paid $137,350, all of which went to the custodial parent. In order to travel to Europe to train U.S. troops stationed overseas in self-defense, an obligor paid $31,450. Another obligor, who wanted to travel to Europe for pleasure and business, made a lump-sum



payment of $29,642.

Other states have also received employment-related payments. Arizona received a $45,900 payment from an obligor who was about to lose his job if he could not travel immediately. An obligor did a wire transfer to Maine from Japan in the amount of $42,500 so that he could continue working overseas. Still another,

Continued on page 7, "Pay Your Child Support"

Inside

Working Together for the Good of a Child.....4
Norway and U.S. Sign Reciprocal Agreement.....6

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
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Office of Child Support Enforcement

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2002 Conference and Events Calendar

July

11-14 - *The Sixth Annual Conference of the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education*, Arlington, VA, Diane Sollie, (202) 362-3332.

15-16 - *Hispanic Leadership Forum*, Arlington, VA, Frank Fajardo, (303) 844-3100, ext. 312.

21-23 - *American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) Council Meeting*,Washington, DC, Justin Latus, (202) 682-0100.

26 - *Kansas Child Support Enforcement Annual Conference*, Topeka, KS, Stephanie Petrie, (785) 776-4011, ext. 298.

30-August 1 - *South Dakota Investigators Training Conference*, Pierre, SD, Nichole MaComb, (605) 773-3641.

August

4-8 -*National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA)Annual Conference and Exposition*, New Orleans, LA, Tara McFarlane, (202) 624-8180

12-13 - *Pacific Hub Family Strengthening Conference*, Seattle, WA, Frank Shields, (206) 615-2569

14 - *Pacific Hub IV-D Directors Meeting*, Seattle, WA, Anita Grandpre, RIX, (415) 437-8424 or Levi Fisher, RX, (206) 615-2519.

19-21 - *Annual Tribal Child Support Enforcement Meeting and Training conference*, Hankinson, ND, Martha Renville, (605) 698-7131.

September

17-20 - *Missouri Child Support Enforcement Association (MCSEA)(25th Anniversary)*, Columbia, MO, Ken Palermo, (636) 797-9852.

19 - *National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Child Support Tele-Talk Broadcast Interpreting Tax Returns*, Tara McFarlane, (202) 624-8180.

23-25 - *National Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) Training Conference*, Arlington, VA, Bertha J. Hammett, (202) 401-5292.

25-27 - *Nebraska Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Annual Training Conference*, Grand Island, NE, Andi Clark, (402) 471-7384.

26-27 - *Asian American and Pacific Islander Forum*, Arlington, VA, Ja-Na Bordes, (202) 401-5713.

13-17 - *Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council (WICSEC) Annual Training Conference*, Portland, OR, Cheri Breitenstein, (503) 945-6158.

October

20-22 - *Illinois Family Support Enforcement Association (IFSEA) Annual Conference & Members' Meeting*, Naperville, IL, Yvette Perez-Trevino, (630) 844-8935.

27-31 - *Domestic Relations Association of Pennsylvania Annual Conference*, Farmington, PA, Jeannette Bowers, (717) 299-8145 or 299-8138.

TBA - *Washington State Family Support Council's Annual Conference*, Judy Young, (360) 664-5063.

TBA - *Maryland Joint Child Support Conference*, Ocean City, MD, Kelvin Harris, (410) 764-2843.

TBA - *Michigan Family Support Council Annual Training Conference*, Pam Sala, (313) 224-5281.

23-25 - *New England Child Support Training Conference*, Hyannis, MA, Chris Arciero, (617) 565-2472.

More information available at http:www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse

Meet Our New Staff

Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller recently announced the appointment of two new staff members to her front office team: Kimberley Berlin and William Rivera.

Kimberley Berlin

Ms. Berlin, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, will track and coordinate Dr. Heller's appointments, meetings, and assigned tasks, and take the lead on certain special projects. In making this appointment, the Commissioner stressed Ms. Berlin's wide academic and private-sector background with an emphasis on the social sciences and her "long-term interest and experience with programs including welfare and domestic violence." Early on in her career, she worked with community organizations such as immigrant farm workers. Dr. Heller also noted Ms. Berlin's particular interest in Knowledge Management - - using systems and skills to eliminate barriers toward the sharing of information and solutions for more effective programs.

William Rivera

Mr. Rivera will serve as Senior Advisor to the Commissioner. He will provide "in-house" legal support to Dr. Heller as well as to division chiefs, especially on inter-jurisdictional and statutory/regulatory problems. Commissioner Heller cited his "long-term commitment to child support enforcement, with a particular interest in the policy area." The Commissioner also reported that Mr. Rivera has conducted research and analysis of the Family Support Act and various child support guideline models.

Mr. Rivera comes to the Office of Child Support Enforcement from the Justice Department, where he served from 1995 as a defense attorney for Federal agencies. He initially handled commercial matters such as contracts and bankruptcy, and more recently concentrated on defending Federal programs in areas such as the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts. Mr. Rivera is the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship and studied in Stockholm. □

If you would like to submit an article for possible publication in the Child Support Report, please contact Tom Starnes at (202) 401-5536 or tstarnes@acf.hhs.gov.

Working Together for the Good of a Child

An International Case Study

By: Charles Kenber

The hand-written letter addressed to OCSE in Washington DC included a photograph of a young boy. Written in August 1998 by a distraught mother from a town on the outskirts of Manila, the letter began: "I send this picture of my son in case you could find his father please can you show it to him. He know he had a son back here in the Philippines Islands."

The mother knew relatively few facts about the father: name, birthday, his U.S. military base, and his date of reassignment back to the U.S.. One more thing: he told her he was from Boston.

All contact between the couple ended when her son's father returned to the U.S. in 1988. She tried to raise the child herself, but a severe eye injury at age five resulted in years of expensive medical treatment including surgery to repair his damaged vision. Thinking that his father might still be in the military, perhaps with health insurance that could help with his son's medical expenses, the mother finally sought help.

This international request was transmitted to an OCSE Regional Office. This time, to Boston. There, OCSE staff contacted Gail Dorey, Supervisor of the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) Parent Locator Unit, to see if DOR could followup on this atypical case. DOR agreed, and a Massachusetts IV-D application was mailed to the mother in the Philippines. In January 1999, DOR received her completed application.

Fortunately, the putative father's uncommon last name produced only one Boston address linked to that name. By effectively utilizing all of the locate resources available, Gail Dorey confirmed that while his parents resided at the Boston address, the putative father now lived in Utah.

With location accomplished, the next step was to involve Utah's Office of Child Support Services (CSS). Boston OCSE contacted staff from our counterpart regional office in Denver, who advised

Gail Dorey, Supervisor of the Massachusetts Parent Locator Unit

that a case like this should be referred directly to LeAnn Wilber, CSS Interstate Coordinator for Utah's Office of Recovery Services.

In February 1999, DOR transferred the case to Utah, where Ms. Wilber, along with CSS Agent Susan Brandjes and John Bradley of the Utah Attorney General's Office, followed through on what was to be a prolonged process to secure support for a child on the other side of the globe.

First, a paternity affidavit was sent to the mother requesting blood samples from her and her child. The putative father was also contacted, and he immediately agreed to a paternity test.

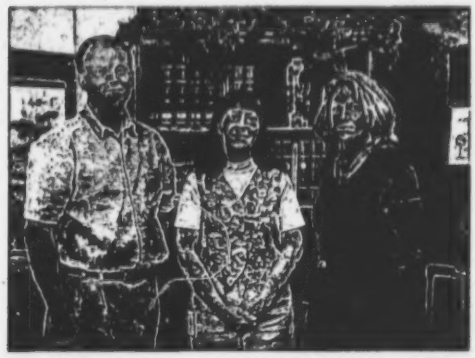
The following month, CSS received the mother's signed paternity affidavit, along with her son's birth certificate and a statement from a Manila physician agreeing to draw blood for the tests. CSS made arrangements with Lab Corp., one of its contract laboratories, to send a paternity testing kit to the doctor in Manila.

By July, 1999, DNA testing was completed. The results: the Utah man was the boy's biological father(99.87%). Although indicating his willingness to stipulate paternity, he resisted paying support based on Utah's guidelines arguing for a deviation from

Utah's guidelines because the cost of living in the Philippines was significantly lower than in the United States.

The father secured an attorney, and for months the case dragged on over the support amount as well as over jurisdictional issues. At one point, the defense claimed that given the mother's foreign residence, Utah lacked jurisdiction in the case, but eventually withdrew that claim.

After more than two years of legal maneuvering, CSS succeeded in obtaining a paternity judgement and a temporary child support order. To get pater-



Left to right: John Bradley, Utah Attorney General's Office, Susan Brandjes, CSS Agent, and LeAnn Wilber, CSS Interstate Coordinator.

nity established, the court agreed to temporarily deviate from Utah's guidelines and a lower amount was ordered until the matter could be further explored. Motions are currently on file in the Utah courts addressing the temporary child support order issue. In the meantime, the father is paying his child support.

In retrospect, this was a case that could easily have been unsuccessful, given the facts -- an old address, mother and father half a world apart, two states involved. But, the case was a success because child support enforcement workers cared enough about the boy in the picture to follow through on his behalf.□

Charles Kenher is a Children and Families Program Specialist in OCSE's Regional Office in Boston.

Child Support – Working Together, Keeping It Real

What's real today about Child Support Enforcement? We know about its long history as one of the nation's largest debt collection programs. It has attained goals that the states and the Federal government can be proud of. But what distinguishes its current reinvention?

If you'll join us at the 12th National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference this September, you can experience for yourself the Child Support Enforcement program of the 21st century.

A perusal of the conference agenda reveals it all. You'll see workshops on customer service because today, more than ever, we recognize that by serving the child, the custodial parent, and the noncustodial parent, we do what's best for the family. There are workshops highlighting child support in partnership with a wide array of agencies, institutions, and organizations, because we know that collaboration produces results that matter. You'll see workshops that feature practical solutions to on-going problems and workshops that help to redefine problems when traditional solutions fail to work.

The conference also features a selected series of workshops in three areas of special interest: the State Child Access and Visitation Program, Child Support Research, and Training for Child Support Trainers. The workshops have been scheduled to ensure that interested individuals will be able to attend all workshops of a particular track.

There will be four Tribal Child Support Enforcement program workshops, two of which will be videoconferenced to numerous reservations across the country.

In addition, all conference participants are encouraged to attend OCSE's 2nd Annual Research Meeting on Wednesday afternoon, September 25. Tentative topics for discussion include reducing undistributed collections, improving collections in interstate cases, and increasing regular payments by

Continued on page 7, "Working Together"

Norway and U.S. Sign Reciprocal Child Support Agreement

By: Richard Sternowski

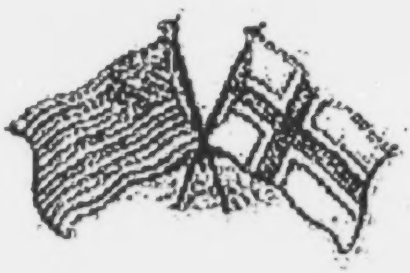
Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, Commissioner, OCSE participated in a ceremony in the historic Treaty Room of the Department of State on June 10, 2002. The occasion was the signing of a reciprocal child support agreement with Norway. The signatories to the agreement were William Howard Taft, IV, Legal Advisor to the Secretary of State, and Knut Vollebaek, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway.

The agreement formalized years of partnership between the two countries. In the past, Norway has had reciprocity with many states in the United States. Norway assisted states in the enforcement of maintenance obligations by establishing paternity and obtaining Norwegian orders for support. However, Norwegian law stipulated that direct recognition and enforcement of existing U. S. orders was not possible without a Federal-level reciprocal agreement.

For the past five years, U. S. delegations have been meeting with representatives from Norway to work on the details of this agreement. The agreement contains provisions which satisfy all of the required elements of the U. S. legislation and are also consistent with the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act.

In her remarks at the signing ceremony, Commissioner Heller said, "While I am pleased that so many technical issues were successfully addressed, what really matters is the difference this will make for children."

The Norway reciprocal agreement is the 6th agreement signed this year. Other agreements concluded this year include the Netherlands, and the Canadian Provinces of Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick and



Newfoundland. This summer, the Department of State and representatives from the Federal OCSE conducted negotiations with a number of European countries, including Switzerland and Germany, as well as the Central American countries of Costa Rica, Honduras and El Salvador.□

Richard Sternowski is an International Specialist for OCSE.

Interesting Fact

Languages into which UIFSA-like Forms have been translated:

Croatian	Polish
Czech	Portuguese
Finnish	Russian
French	Romanian
German	Slovak
Greek	Slovenian
Hebrew	Spanish
Hungarian	Turkish
Italian	

Child Support Children First

Pay Your Child Support

Continued from page 1

who also resides in Japan, made a $27,351 payment to Wisconsin. While working in Saudi Arabia, an obligor from Florida paid his case in full: $20,061. Washington State received a $15,000 payment from an obligor who needed to travel to Rome for employment purposes. Finally, a priest from Hawaii, who was scheduled to perform a wedding ceremony in India, borrowed $5,450 to put toward his arrears so he could travel.

Visiting family and friends overseas often brings in large collection amounts. An obligor in California made a $110,000 cash payment so he could visit his family in Malaysia. Washington State collected $34,255 from an obligor who had plans to visit his girlfriend in the Philippines. Another obligor from Washington wanted to accompany his wife on a trip, but couldn't get a passport. Her father, as a graduation gift, had given her a trip to Russia. Tacoma County child support office insisted on payment in full. The obligor borrowed $7,601 from his grandmother and was able to accompany his wife. New York received $28,781 from an obligor so he could visit family overseas. Illinois collected $17,511 when an obligor wanted to visit his elderly mother and $9,218 from another who wished to visit his family in South America.

Entertainers frequently need to travel, and they make sizeable payments in order to obtain their passports. A special effects coordinator from California paid $14,000 so he could obtain his passport to work on a film in Europe, and a singer from Montana paid $11,000 towards his arrearages so that he could perform with a gospel group on tour in Japan and Germany.

Sometimes there are circumstances that just do not fit into any one specific category. An obligor from New York, having no travel plans at all, paid $65,321 just so he could have his passport. A California passport release case actually started back in October 2001. The obligor had no verifiable job or means of income. After many different stories, he finally claimed that his father had just died in Japan and he had to travel for the funeral. When the death certificate was received, it was for a woman who had died the month before! His request for a passport release was refused, and the office never heard from him again until he went to the county and paid his account in full: $55,545.

For more information on the passport denial program or to report your own success story, please contact OCSE's Rebecca Hamil at (202) 690-5378 or email the Special Collections Unit at scollections@acf.hhs.gov□

Working Together

Continued from page 5

noncustodial parents. There is no additional cost for this meeting, which includes a working lunch.

Finally, Dr. Sherri Z. Heller will share with you her experiences during her first year as OCSE's Commissioner. She will discuss her ideas for change and innovation and analyze current managerial and budgetary issues facing child support enforcement agencies.

The conference will be September 23-25, 2002 at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, VA. Information and a registration form is provided in DCL-02-12 which is available on the National Electronic Child Support Enforcement Resource System (NECSRS). NECSRS is located on OCSE's web site at www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/. Ms. Bertha Hammett of OCSE's National Training Center can be contacted for assistance. Her telephone number is (202) 401-5292; her email address is bhammett@acf.hhs.gov.□

LET'S TAKE CARE OF OUR KIDS.
CHILD SUPPORT.

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Division of Consumer Services
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Child Support Report

Applications for Innovation Grants Now Being Accepted

On May 24, 2002, the U.S. DHHS Office of the Secretary, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), published a notice in the Federal Register regarding innovation grants. The notice can be found on ASPE's web site at http://aspe.hhs.gov/state-innov-grants.htm. The purpose of the grants is to allow state agencies to submit competitive grant applications for financial assistance in order to plan for, or implement, innovative approaches for the delivery of health and human services. This announcement has 2 tracks. Track 1 is for demonstration grants; track 2 is for planning grants. States may submit applications to either or both tracks. There is no limit on the number of applications that a state may submit. The closing date for submitting applications under this announcement is July 23, 2002.☐

Child Support Report
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If you have enjoyed this issue of ***Child Support Report****, please pass it on to a co-worker or friend.*

Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement **Vol. XXIV, No. 8, August 2002**

Customer Service: Language and Cultural Issues

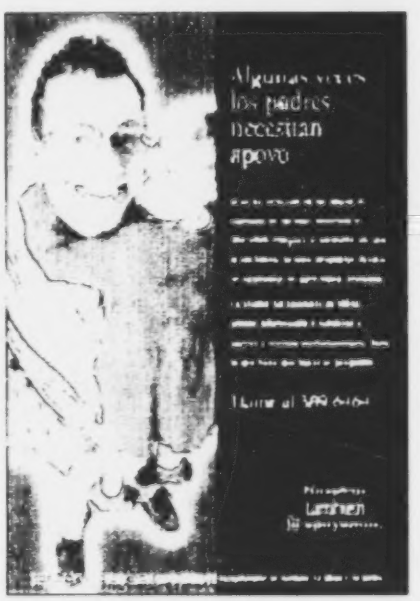
By: Frank Fajardo

It is clear from the latest U. S. Census report that our society has undergone rather dramatic shifts in the make-up of its population in recent years. Ethnic/racial minorities now make up almost one third of the total population. The Hispanic/Latino population has grown to 35.3 million in ten years, an increase of 58 percent, and represents 12.6 percent of the total population. If public service programs – such as child support enforcement with all its customers- are going to achieve optimal effectiveness, they must find ways to adapt their services to meet the needs of this changing society.

The Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) made a major move in this direction a few years back when it published a Spanish edition of the Child Support Handbook (*Mi Familia, Nuestra Vida*). That was followed by the Spanish production of its paternity establishment video, "*The Power of Two*" (*El Poder de 2*).

Although language differences are more obvious, other cultural differences need to be seen as major factors in planning programs to effectively serve our expanded customer base.

For instance, some ethnic, cultural and language minority populations experience more than the normal difficulties in working through the requirements of the child support system in order to obtain the needed support. For this reason, OCSE believes that an increased effort to reach as broad a customer base as possible should form an integral part of our basic program services and be on our list of goals for improvement.



Wisconsin Advertising campaign directed towards non-custodial parents

It is for this reason that OCSE issued Section 1115 Demonstration and Special Improvement Project (SIP) grants to design and test new methods of providing services and materials for traditionally under-

Continued on page 6, "Customer Service"

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Inside

Minnesota Program Promotes Father Involvement.....3
Ohio's Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group.....4

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Commissioner Heller Testifies for Department at U.S. House Committee On Government Reform Subcommittee on Technology and Procurement Policy

OCSE Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller represented the Department by testifying on July 9, 2002 at the subcommittee's hearing on Federal agency processes related to the approval of state information technology (IT) projects supporting state-administered Federal human services programs. The programs include: Child Support Enforcement, Child Welfare, Medicaid and Food Stamps. Other Federal officials testifying represented the General Accounting Office (GAO), which recently studied the issue, and the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services also sent a representative to answer questions. Also testifying, were chief information officers from the States of Kentucky and Georgia and a representative of the private sector. Commissioner Heller's testimony was on the general topic of IT systems approval and not specifically related to child support enforcement systems.

Commissioner Heller and the other Federal representatives pointed out that the GAO study showed that, in the vast majority of cases looked at, Federal responses (i.e., funding approvals) were within legislatively-established time frames. They stated that, due to the potential for large amounts of funds being wasted on poor decision making, appropriate oversight is necessary and indicated a willingness to continue to work with the states and each other to come up with a fair and balanced process that satisfies the need for accountability. During the question-and-answer portion of the hearing, Dr. Heller drew attention to the importance of data security and privacy issues, noting that the Federal oversight can address disclosure protections when states are building cross-program automation systems.

Dr. Heller's statement can be viewed at: www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/new/it_hearing_testimony.htm.□

Customer Service Web Development Training Workshops

The Office of Child Support Enforcement is sponsoring five "Customer Service Web Development" training workshops which will be two days in length. These workshops will showcase best practices and lessons learned from states and provide information for participants in defining, building, and operating a Child Support Enforcement (CSE) web-based customer service system in your state or territory. The first of five workshops will be held during the 12th National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference in Arlington, Virginia on September 23-25, 2002. Other workshop dates and locations are:

November 14-15, 2002 in New York City;
January 13-14, 2003 in Dallas;
February 25-26, 2003 in Atlanta; and
March 25-26, 2003 in Seattle.

The intended audience for this workshop is technical staff who are, or will be, responsible for building state's web-based CSE customer service system. We ask that these staff members be given first priority to attend. Each workshop can accommodate up to 30 attendees each. A Dear Colleague letter, DCL - 02 -16, was signed and sent to IV-D Directors on July 8, 2002 encouraging them to nominate staff to participate in these training sessions. OCSE will pay travel, lodging, and per diem expenses for one participant per state, but states are welcome to send additional staff at their own expense, space permitting.

Continued on page 5," Web Development"

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Minnesota Program Promotes Father Involvement

A new program is helping fathers in Northern Minnesota with custody, parenting, child development and other issues.

Since September 2001, child support officers have been able to refer fathers to a program called DADs. DADs promotes the positive involvement of fathers in the lives of their children and connects parents to mentors and peer groups.

"We feel good that we finally have a place to refer parents," said Mary Lou Feroni, St. Louis County child support supervisor. "Anything that strengthens the relationships between fathers and mothers and their children benefits us and the families."

DADs promotes the positive involvement of fathers in the lives of their children and connects parents to mentors and peer groups.

DADs recently hosted two law clinics. Approximately 60 parents, mostly fathers, attended each clinic and asked questions about support, paternity establishment, parenting time and custody. Feroni called the clinics a success and said child support will continue to participate quarterly.

Velura Peterson, who has more than 20 years' experience assisting fathers, spearheaded the program. Peterson attended the Family Ties Collaborative Summit in 2000 on a scholarship from the Minnesota Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED). "We knew Velura Peterson had a vision and a determination to make things happen," said Mary Anderson, CSED supervisor of awareness and education.

Since then, Peterson has created opportunities to support fathers where nothing existed before. She now coordinates the DADs Program through a nonprofit organization called the Wesley House Project. Wesley House secured a $20,000 grant from the Northland Foundation, a private organization in Duluth that serves people in greater Minnesota. The grant, "Through the Eyes of the Child," aims to develop and enhance healthy relationships between fathers and their children. An additional $35,000 grant from the Hibbling Family Services Collaborative pays for office space, supplies and staff at the Family Investment Center in Hibbling.

The location is critical because it strategically places the program with seven other organizations that deal with youth and at-risk populations. "Being there helps us be involved and helps all of us to provide wraparound services," said Peterson.

For additional information about the program, contact Velura Peterson at 218-749-9779 □

Ohio's Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group

By: Susan McKinley

The Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group (CSRSG) was formed in April 2001 to assist the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and county child support enforcement agencies in their efforts to improve the quality of services in Ohio's child support program. The CSRSG is comprised of county and State staff, a Federal government representative (Gale Quinn, Program Specialist, Region V); parents; judges; prosecutors; advocacy groups; legislators; employers; and prosecutors.

The CSRSG's task is to review financial, administrative, program, policy, customer service, technology, and inter-system issues. After examining their effectiveness and accountability, it will make recommendations in October 2002 to the ODJFS Director, the Governor, and the State legislature, for improvements that are specific, realistic and measurable.

Since the recommendations will be strongly supported by research and will have the buy-in of the shareholders, it is expected that, over the long run, many of the recommendations will be implemented. After the implementation, it is expected that child support customers will benefit from improved quality in the delivery of services. In fact, customers and shareholders have benefited already from improved program awareness.

Purpose Statement

At its first meeting, the CSRSG agreed on a purpose statement:

The purpose of the Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group is to assist the State of Ohio, counties, and child support partners in improving programs and the delivery of quality services to all parents and their children. The shareholders' group will take a holistic approach to establish long-term priorities and to develop innovative strategies to create a more effective and efficient child support program in Ohio.

Description of the Program

The CSRSG has spent the past year gathering and reviewing information from every facet of child support service delivery in Ohio. In order to cover all areas involved, seven subcommittees were asked to concentrate on various areas. The committees formed were: Parents for Rights and Responsibilities, Accountability and Dependability, Customer Service, Funding and Legislation, Staffing and Training, Structure, and Technology/Work System Design.

Public Awareness Campaign

The CSRSG subcommittees have mounted various public awareness campaign efforts to maximize use of research, review, and analysis efforts. They include:

- **10 Community Forums** for child support system customers held in all geographical areas of the State at various times of the day to accommodate a variety of schedules. Sites were selected to include a mix of metropolitan and rural locations.

  Customers including residential and non-residential parents, shareholders, employers, elected officials, and community leaders had an unprecedented opportunity to gain information about Ohio's child support program, to offer suggestions for improvement, and to ask case-specific questions in various manners. Participants responded positively, saying they appreciated the opportunity to be heard at the forums and suggested that the forums continue on a regular basis.
- **A statistically valid, Statewide customer service telephone survey,** currently under way by a professional research firm, will de-

termine customer expectations and allow additional customer feedback to be part of the plans for continued improvement. Advantages of the survey are: its independence, objectivity, professional compilation, and a broad sampling base of 3,000 to 4,000 customers. The parent population was adamant about the completion of the survey, which is, in itself, a customer-driven action. The survey will identify issues for improvement and substantiate recommendations that arise from the *CSRSG*.

- **A detailed survey of Ohio's 88 counties**, provided information about the counties' caseloads, funding levels, organizational structures, training programs, turnover rates, customer service issues, and other information germane to running a successful child support delivery system.
- **A survey of other states' technology level** to determine their level of usage and expertise with the Internet with regard to child support.
- **A quarterly newsletter** titled "*Insight on Child Support in Ohio*," chronicles the progress of the CSRSG and is distributed to more than 5,000 State, Federal, and county representatives; committee members; community forum participants; elected officials; and interested parties. In addition, its mailing list will be a conduit for disseminating the draft recommendations in August.
- **A website**: www.state.oh.us/ODJFS/shareholders/index.stm was created to inform the public about the CSRSG, post the minutes of the subcommittees' meetings, and allow an additional opportunity for parents and shareholders to both obtain information and to provide feedback. The *CSRSG* draft recommendations will be posted on the website for one month for public feedback before the CSRSG proceeds with making final recommendations for improvements to Ohio's child support system.
- **Child Support Awareness Month Campaign** was a pilot public awareness program developed for Ohio's 88 counties to help them publicize Child Support Awareness Month in August. The campaign included publicity/information packets, posters, and sample customer service surveys. Informational booths were maintained at the Ohio State Fair for 18 days, and at countless county fairs. Plans are to build on this awareness campaign each year.

The CSRSG's efforts to collect, research, and analyze information about Ohio's child support system have brought public awareness to its mission of making targeted recommendations to improve the delivery of child support services. □

Susan McKinley is Program Manager for the Child Support Reform Shareholders' Group.

Web Development

Continued from page 2

During the workshop, participants will receive relevant information and documentation collected from various states and a contact list of Federal and state personnel who can assist after the workshop ends. Participants will also leave the workshop with a "to do" list with three to five specific actions they can take to initiate or enhance a web-based CSE customer service system.

For further information, please contact Michael Rifkin at (202) 401-6501, mrifkin@acf.hhs.gov.□

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Customer Service

Continued from page 1

served communities with language/culture issues. These grant opportunities encouraged community-based organizations, state agencies, researchers, and advocates to seek improvements in their customer service and outreach in communities with language and cultural needs.

Eight grants were awarded to states and non-profit and faith-based organizations to enhance outreach to the Hispanic/Latino community:

The California "Latino Outreach" uses media and community-based organizations in developing/testing targeted approaches/materials to enhance the understanding and use of child support by the urban Latino population in Los Angeles.

Minnesota "Paternity Establishment Percentage Improvement Initiative" uses advocacy groups and medical professional groups to identify cultural barriers and develop materials for use in "in hospital paternity establishment" by non-English speaking fathers. Minnesota will also test different approaches to helping non-English speaking clients by using bilingual child support workers in different working arrangements in a leading county.

New Mexico's Outreach Workshop to Hispanics

New Mexico's "Comprehensive Outreach Supporting Paternity and Support Order Entry" will develop an outreach program and a centralized bilingual staff to increase the rate of paternity and support order establishment and to create a national model of outreach to Hispanics.

Washington's "Madrina Project" is attempting to remove barriers to effective child support service and providing targeted consumer education in Yakima County. Local community leaders, "madrinas" (godparents), receive extensive training and are providing community outreach, education, and assistance on child support services.

United Migrant Opportunities Service (UMOS) "Latino/Hispanic Community Child Support Outreach Project" in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is testing new models for conducting outreach activities (radio advertising, brochures, billboards, transit signs, direct mail) with separate custodial and non-custodial target campaigns within larger campaigns.

Christian Family Gathering "Nuestro Hijos (Our Children) Advocacy Project," also in Milwaukee, is a faith-based organization providing outreach with trained church members as advocates to assist individuals in need of child support services.

Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund, "Strengthening Support: Building Bridges Between Communities," is providing outreach, awareness campaigns, education and advocacy services in child support to Latino communities in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, and Willamantic areas. This project empowers parents to become child support advocates for community members who need help navigating the child support system.

Ecumenical Child Care Network Resources for Families Project is developing a collaborative effort with child support enforcement, family support, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) agencies to sponsor four community forums, in four

Continued on page 7, "Customer Service"

Child Support Children First

Customer Service

Continued from page 6

different cities, to forge new collaborations among houses of worship, welfare agencies, and early childhood and other community programs.

Best practices from these projects will be shared broadly.

Not enough is known about how child support enforcement is viewed among ethnic, cultural, and language minority populations. Our success as a government service agency will be measured by how well we adapt to these changing times and adapt our programs in order that we might more adequately serve this significant and growing part of our customer base. A SIP grant announcement (OCSE 99SIP-02) for Child Support Enforcement Demonstration and Special Improvement Projects was issued on May 30, 2002 in the Federal Register (67 FR 37811). This grant announcement has a Priority Area for improving child support services for ethnic and culturally diverse populations, tribes and the international community.

For more information on the eight grants listed, and to submit any ideas you might have, contact Frank Fajardo, 303-844-1144.□

Frank Fajardo is the Minority Initiatives Coordinator in OCSE's Division of Special Staffs.

Wisconsin Advertising campaign directed towards custodial parents

Northeast Hub Continues To Tackle Arrears Issue

By: Jens Feck

The Northeast Hub is convening once more to discuss the increasingly important issue of effective arrears management. The meeting will take place this September in Arlington, VA, in conjunction with the 12th National OCSE Training Conference. The Northeast Hub met twice last year in Philadelphia: first to establish a discussion framework and a second time to report on the progress of new initiatives.

The outcome of these meetings is captured in two summaries that provide extensive detail on arrears management issues and solutions, accompanied by numerous descriptions of state best practices, initiatives and on-going pilot projects. The summaries are now available on the OCSE website's National Electronic Child Support Resource System, by searching for "Managing Child Support Arrears: A Discussion Framework" under the topic of *Best Practices* or the State of *Maryland*, *Connecticut* or *New Jersey*. The website address is: ocse.acf.dhhs.gov/necsrspub.

The September meeting will focus on the outcomes and results of on-going initiatives and new policy implementations. States will also report on new initiatives and the status of pending or recently-enacted arrears management legislation.

Finally, states plan to discuss the possible impact of changing economic times upon arrears management issues, and whether or not it may be appropriate to change the priority of alternative arrears management solutions in response. Meeting outcomes will once again be summarized and made available to all interested parties. For more information about the Hub meetings, please contact Jens A. Feck at (787) 766-5196 or jfeck@acf.hhs.gov.□

Jens A. Feck is a Program Specialist in OCSE's Region II

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Georgia Fatherhood Program Video Gets Bronze Telly Award

Georgia's Fatherhood Program video "The Father's Side" won a second place bronze Telly Award.

The video was produced by Elaine Tillier, executive producer of Georgia Public Television (GPTV) Client Projects at Georgia Public Broadcasting. Tillier submitted the video, which was one of more than 11,000 entries in the 2001 national competition among leading advertising agencies and top corporations.

The Georgia Child Support Enforcement office contracted with Georgia Public Broadcasting to produce the 30-minute video, which aired on GPTV in June 2001. It profiles three Georgia Fatherhood Program participants who have problems with visitation and transportation, have criminal backgrounds, and are substance abusers. The project was shown on Georgia Public Broadcasting on Father's Day, 2001 and was seen in over 111,000 homes.

Copies of the video were distributed to all state IV-D offices. Additional copies are available for $3. For more information, call 1-888-432-8437.☐

Telly Awards are a well-known, highly-respected national competition to honor outstanding non-network and cable commercials, video productions, and films.

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement Vol. XXIV, No. 9, September 2002

LEADING CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By: Jack Shaw

Last spring, 11 State IV-D Directors and Senior Executives completed OCSE's **Innovative Leadership Practices in Child Support Enforcement.** Lisa Woodruff-White (LW), Louisiana's IV-D Director, Barb Austin (BA), Washington's Chief of Field Operations, and Jerry Steele (JS), Maryland's Deputy Director for the CSE Administration, took part in an interview regarding the Innovative Leadership Practices course.

CSR: *Do you see effective leadership increasing child support collections?*

BA (Barb Austin): In an environment of decreasing resources, we need to deliver the maximum results with the most efficient use of human and fiscal resources. Unless we can inspire, coach, and lead our staff, we will be unable to meet this challenge.

JS (Jerry Steele): Yes. Effective leadership will increase child support collections because the techniques that were learned during the course will enhance the Directors' management philosophies and styles.

CSR: *Can you explain the value of leadership training for CSE staff?*

BA: This training was invaluable! The 360° review provided a range of insight into my leadership strengths (the fun part) and weaknesses (the humbling part). The direct reports offered a basis for discussion with my peers and my supervisor on how I could improve my effectiveness.

JS: Leadership training for child support enforcement staff is a must. In order for the staff to understand the big picture, they must understand the vision and values of the organization, which in turn will create a high performance organization.

CSR: *What exactly is the leadership role in the CSE environment?*

LW (Lisa Woodruff-White): Leadership plays an important role in creating and communicating a vision as well as establishing a sense of urgency, empowering staff, aligning the organization, and dealing with culture and change. It seems to be the role of the leader to evaluate and indicate activity in these areas necessary to meet organizational goals.

JS: The leader must be able to communicate the

Continued on page 6, "21st Century"

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Inside

From Parents Fair Share to Work First.....3
Using Existing Resources Through Collaboration.....4

Faith-Based Summit

By: Carri Brown

The mission statement of the Fairfield County, Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) states that it will help ensure the healthy development of children by carrying out its mission while emphasizing accountability, customer service, and *community collaboration*. Community collaboration was the focus of a recent special event dubbed the Faith-Based and Partnership Summit: The Power of One.

Faith-based and community groups share a common mission in providing children and families the support they need to be healthy and strong. The Summit was an opportunity for the groups to come together and open their eyes to the services and programs provided within the community.

The agency invited all faith-based and community groups in the area to join it for a full-day conference. The purposes of the Summit were to:

- Recognize the common mission of faith-based organizations and community groups in serving adults, children and families,
- Learn about the services that exist within the community,
- Produce a shared database for information and referral purposes,
- Create work groups that will focus on just one thing to accomplish together over the next six months and
- Celebrate the work accomplished by faith-based and community groups.

Faith-based and community groups share a common mission in providing children and families the support they need to be healthy and strong. The Summit was an opportunity for the groups to come together and open their eyes to the services and programs provided within the community.

More than 107 community leaders attended the Summit, with 64 groups being represented. Each participant stated that the event should happen annually, and each stated that they received information that was helpful to their work in meeting and anticipating the needs of children and families.

In addition, all participants stated that the Summit effectively captured the common mission of governments and faith-based organizations. The energetic event resulted in a database for community referrals on counseling services, parenting classes, support groups and activities for children and families.

Faith-based and community groups share a common mission in providing children and families the support they need to be healthy and strong.

Keynote speakers were David Ball, Associate Director of the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation and adjunct professor at The Methodist Theological School and Rev. Nelson Meyer, president of Lutheran Social Services of Ohio. Each spoke about the role of faith-based organizations in the community, especially how this role related to the public sector.

The Summit resulted in work groups focused on six initiatives for the entire community: Crisis Awareness, Older Adult Networking and Outreach, Foster Care and Adoption, Childcare Initiatives, Parenthood Initiatives and Healthy Marriages. Resulting pamphlets and informational packets will be placed at the Child Support Enforcement Agency, which is combined with the County Job and Family Services. Work Group members are now working on various initiatives that will result in a seamless delivery of services for customers. A follow-up meeting is scheduled in November.□

Carri Brown is Director of the Child Support Enforcement agency in Fairfield County, Ohio.

From Parents' Fair Share to Work First

By: William D. Camden

The Kent County Friend of the Court office in Grand Rapids, Michigan, selected as one of the seven national Parents' Fair Share research sites, produced positive results, according to a report published by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC). When the research project ended, there was some concern whether the services provided to unemployed non-custodial parents would be continued.

The work has continued. After a couple of rough tentative years, the Work First Project is thriving in Michigan, especially in Grand Rapids, where the project continues to be jointly administered by the Kent County Friend of the Court and the Hope Network of West Michigan.

After a couple of rough tentative years, the Work First Project is thriving in Michigan, especially in Grand Rapids, where the project continues to be jointly administered by the Kent County Friend of the Court and the Hope Network of West Michigan.

For the first three quarters of fiscal year 2002, the Friend of the Court identified and referred 987 non-custodial parents to Hope Network for employment services. Of these referrals, 626 were enrolled, and of those, 569 attended an orientation and at least one activity. At present, 257 are employed and, during the three quarters, have contributed $207,156 in child support via income-withholding orders. The average wage of this group is $8.38 per hour.

In addition, of the original 987 referrals, 62 obligors were found to have already been employed and were therefore counted under the "smoke out" effect. Income-withholding orders were placed on their employers resulting in child support collections totaling $77,962 during the three quarters.

Top Row: Ray Jackson, Manager of placement services for Hope Network; Terry Novakoski, Supervisor, Kent County Friend of the Court. 2nd Row: Dee Walker, Tina Kilgore, Case Managers, and Ginger Tracy, Casework Assistant for the Kent County Friend of the Court.

Of the four research variables applied to the experimental group (enhanced enforcement, mediation, peer support and job counseling and placement), all but the peer support component are active viable components of the Work First Project, and peer support is being offered, but in a much abbreviated format.

Plans for fiscal year 2003 include special targeting of 75 young unemployed non-custodial parents, ages 19 through 21. For this target population, it is anticipated that a much more comprehensive version of the excellent MDRC-developed full peer support curriculum will be utilized.

The Michigan Family Independence Agency, the Michigan Supreme Court, the Kent County Family Court judges, the Kent County Friend of the Court, Hope Network, the Kent County business community, and citizens as a whole continue to support this project as a worthwhile service for unemployed and under-employed non-custodial parents.□

William D. Camden is Kent County Friend of the Court.

Using Existing Resources Through Collaboration

By: Steven P. Veno

Working to enhance the self-sufficiency of the families we serve, the Kentucky Division of Child Support has made increasing child support collections one of our top priorities.

Like many other states, Kentucky has a high IV-D caseload and limited IV-D staff. As a result, Kentucky began exploring other state agencies that had not only the resources and the technology, but also the willingness to assist in child support collections. The agency that met these needs was the Kentucky Revenue Cabinet.

The Revenue Cabinet, highly successful in collecting state taxes, was more than willing to assist. Not only did they bring with them experienced collection staff and an existing computer system that can accept child support data, but also contracts with private companies that provide them with the most recent names and addresses of individuals filing for bankruptcy in Kentucky. The Revenue Cabinet agreed to transfer these data to the child support office, and is willing to make calls to non-custodial parents, complete payment agreements, and file liens with the courts in an expedited manner.

Through collaboration, a very successful pilot was initiated in April 2001, with a project beginning in late summer 2002. The pilot was designed to monitor the outcome of letters mailed to non-custodial parents who met certain criteria using the letterhead of the Kentucky Revenue Cabinet. The letters told non-custodial parents that they were delinquent in their child support payments, and they were given 20 days to respond. If they did not respond, their case would be referred to the Kentucky Revenue Cabinet where a new Child Support Collection Task Force would take immediate collection action.

The areas to be monitored by the Division of Child Support included returned mail, telephone calls from non-custodial parents who challenged the arrearages and those who wanted to make payment arrangements, and the amount of collections made by non-custodial parents as a result of the letter.

In April 2001, approximately 6,700 letters were mailed to non-custodial parents. Approximately 1,000 letters were returned because of invalid addresses, and 350 letters came back because the non-custodial parent was incarcerated. From May 1, 2001 through April 30, 2002, 4,137 payments have been received totaling $500,886.

The success of the pilot cases prompted the first collaboration meeting in August 2001 between the Division of Child Support, the Revenue cabinet and the technology staff from both agencies. Project roles and responsibilities were created which identified a core team and a steering committee. In the following months, the agency core teams held numerous in-house meetings and met collaboratively with the core team members in both agencies. As ideas and concerns developed, additional members of agencies were included in all of the meetings. New ideas, such as providing Revenue with the Financial Institution Data Match file, were discussed, reviewed and granted. In addition, the Revenue Cabinet was successful in enacting legislation to use the federally mandated child support forms in its collection process.

The project itself will begin with the mailing of 500 letters by the Division of Child Support. Any of the letters that do not result in successful collection will be transferred to the Revenue Cabinet, where a collection process will begin. The decision to send only a limited number of letters will give both agencies time to review and adjust any discrepancies that are identified.

This collaborative effort is working to enhance the lives of the families that Kentucky's Division of Child Support serves. It is also serving to fashion a working partnership between two different government agencies.□

Steven P. Veno is the Director of the Kentucky Division of Child Support.

Colorado Conducts Needs Assessment of Customer Information Needs

By: Robin Rushton

The State of Colorado Department of Human Services, is conducting an E-Commerce business area analysis needs assessment report on interactive functions that allow customers and stakeholders to interact with the child support agency online via the Internet. Other state participation in this on-line survey was solicited via the IV-D Directors Listserv earlier this year.

The on-line survey asked customers to rate the usefulness of 75 possible e-commerce functions and other information that could be made available on the State's web site. A total of 519 surveys were completed. Interviews with 20 individuals, as well as focus groups with custodial parents, non-custodial parents, and employers were conducted.

The ranking of the e-commerce functions differed according to the group. For example, the custodial parent group indicated that the ability to send email to the caseworker would be the most useful function, whereas the non-custodial parent and the in-state caseworkers ranked posting the date of last payment received by the State Disbursement Unit as the most useful. Interstate professionals gave highest priority to arrears balance. Employers ranked online forms especially to notify state of termination of employee or verify employment as the most useful function.

The study also ranked the design of different types of web-financial statements.

The report raises some policy and security issues that states need to consider in developing their websites. One concerned non-custodial parent's desire for log-in by name or Social Security number since they do not always know their case I.D. Another security issue raised is the need to secure sensitive information sent via email. The State may have e-mail protocols to prevent Social Security numbers and some financial information from being sent via e-mail, but how do you stop the public from sending this kind of sensitive information via the internet?

The appendices of the report include screen prints from other states' websites as well as the results of the on-line surveys of the needs of custodial parents, non-custodial parents, employers, and in-state and interstate caseworkers.

The survey will be available on the OCSE website. For further information on this survey, contact: Curtis Rose, Curtis.Rose@state.co.us.□

Robin Rushton is Director of State and Tribal Systems.

Future Training

The results of the on-line survey on interactive functions that allow customers and stakeholders to interact with the child support agency online via the Internet will be part of the curriculum for the customer service web training to be provided in five different sites between September 2002 and March 2003. Classes are for technical staff who are, or will be, responsible for building your agency's web-based child support enforcement customer service system. The five sites for this training are:

- September 23-25, 2002 in Arlington, Virginia (12th National CSE Training Conference)
- November 14-15, 2002 in New York City
- January 13-14, 2003 in Dallas
- February 25-26, 2003 in Atlanta; and
- March 25-26, 2003 in Seattle.

Each session can accommodate up to 30 attendees each. For additional information or your nominee's name and contact information, contact Michael Rifkin at mrifkin@acf.hhs.gov.□

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21st Century

Continued from page 1

vision that sparks excitement to the staff. In the *CSE* environment, staff has been conditioned to operate in a less strategic thinking way and in a less decision-making process that affects the entire organization. Empowering staff is another key element for a leader.

CSR: *Can you tell us what is being done in organizational action plans and why?*

LW: In our organization, there seemed to be complacency in recognizing and/or reacting to issues which were important to staff. Generally, staff were fulfilled by the work that they did, but did not feel valued by upper management. We surveyed our staff and learned about their views on communication, customers, compensation, management, training and other issues. More than 90 percent of our employees responded to the surveys and provided valuable information.

CSR: *How do you think this CSE-related leadership course can improve customer service?*

LW: It stresses the need for organizational leaders to focus some energy on areas often overlooked in organizations - - for example, the formation of powerful coalitions with nontraditional partners providing services which promote families and family formation. It is also important to re-examine existing relationships, which may need to be enhanced or nurtured.

CSR: *How can leadership "vision" principles impact CSE?*

BA: We work in an environment that is subject to a great deal of day-to-day crisis. It is very easy to be in a response mode rather than a strategic mode. Definition of vision allows one to focus on the future, not to get waylaid in the present.

JS: This can happen by keeping people focused on organizational goals, priorities and the plan; by helping others share the vision and stay focused; and by using the vision in the day-to-day decision-making process.

CSR: Do you see leadership in a CSE environment different from the "real" world?

BA: I don't know that it is different, except the program demands are unique. I believe many programs are stressed with political and economic restraints, but child support has those specific emotional responses from people that influence our program resource allocations. This can be for good or bad.

JS: I don't think leadership skills and ability differ in the "real" world from that in government, but there are some shortcomings such as no flexible budgets, the politics, and the lack of current technology.

CSR: *Would you please discuss Strategic Plans versus Leadership Action Plans.*

BA: Leadership is a neglected area of focus. We promote people and assume they know how to be effective leaders. It doesn't work that way! This training was impressive in exploring the value of Strategic Planning and Leadership Action plans.

LW: Continuous evaluation of all areas of the organization is an important leadership goal necessary to prevent complacency. Reacting to organiza-

Child Support Children First

tional needs by creating a sense of urgency is a necessary leadership function if carefully planned and managed.

CSR: *Comment on the importance of Alignment in CSE organizations.*

BA: Critical. You cannot achieve success by heading in different directions, or undermining your efforts when what you say does not match what you do.

CSR: *Can you lead effectively in a "political" environment?*

BA: It is a challenge and a fun one at times. Politics play a part in every part of our lives: church, home, families, organizations, and communities. We must learn the social skills needed to survive and thrive in these areas. Effective leadership is what makes a positive out of a negative. People, ultimately, make a difference and especially our leaders.

CSR: *Was the training successful for you personally?*

BA: This training was the best I have ever attended in my career. It should be offered on a continual basis to child support leaders. Excellent course!

For information regarding this course, please contact Yvette Hilderson Riddick, Chief of OCSE's National Training Center at yriddick@acf.hhs.gov. □

Jack Steele was formerly with OCSE's National Training Center.

North Carolina and Oklahoma Certified

The North Carolina Child Support Enforcement System (ACTS) and the Oklahoma Support Information System (OSIS) were certified as meeting the automation requirements of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). North Carolina is the 14th State and Oklahoma is the 15th State to be PRWORA certified. □

Indiana's Web-Based Payment Solution

By Mary J. Francis

Indiana State officials have implemented a web-based, child support payment processing solution that helps states and employers collect child support payments, which speeds up the distribution of funds to families who need them.

The Child Support Online (CSO) gives states another option to improve the processing of income-withholding payments for child support. The solution automates the payment posting process and reduces the burden on child support staff. State officials said that more than 300 employers in 40 counties use CSO, which is a component of the Indiana Support Enforcement Tracking System (ISETS), a statewide child support information and disbursement system. Over $4.3 million has been processed using CSO.

"Child Support Online assists non-custodial parents in meeting their financial obligations, which, in turn, ensures that custodial parents can meet the needs of their children," said John Hamilton, Secretary of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration.

The CSO offers several web-based features. It diverts employer-withholding payments and processes them without staff involvement. It provides more timely payments and allows a web-based interface to receive answers to payment related questions. It simplifies the income-withholding process by eliminating the need to write checks or produce reports from the company payroll system, thus requiring no enhancements or changes to their existing systems. Finally, it allows connectivity to the ISETS system and flexibility to interface with other Child Support Payment Processing Systems as necessary.

The CSO uses a payment system that executes the electronic funds transfer from the employer's account based on employer input, interfaces with the existing legacy system, deposits the funds into the state account, uses the record provided by the employer online to post payments to the appropriate accounts and initiates distribution of the payment through the existing system. □

Mary J. Francis is Disbursement Unit Supervisor in the Indiana Child Support Agency.

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September 23-25, 2002

Contact Bertha Hammett at OCSE's National Training Center for additional information (202) 401-5292 or bhammett@acf.hhs.gov

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Office of Child Support Enforcement Vol. XXIV, No. 10, October 2002

The Story Behind The Numbers

Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller's address to the 51st Annual National Child Support Enforcement Association Conference, meeting in New Orleans on August 6, 2002, focused on the theme, "the story behind the numbers."

Speaking to an audience of approximately 1200 – made up of child support employees from Federal, state and local offices, social workers and vendors – Dr. Heller stated: "In child support, we're used to the idea that the numbers tell the story. I think we need to get in the habit of looking more closely for the story behind the numbers."

Dr. Heller captured the attention of the audience with her statement "there's more to the story than the numbers and you see it when you look at the numbers from a different point of view." For example, look at our successes: there has been a 60 percent increase nationwide in collections in five years; the number of cases with collections has doubled; two thirds of the cases have orders, and two-thirds of the cases with orders actually get collections. Commissioner Heller then "did the math": "If two-thirds of the cases have orders, and two-thirds get collected on, that means we're getting money for four ninths of our customers. Fewer than half."

Dr. Heller spoke of the maturing of the child support program. It is no longer just a cost recovery program for states to recoup welfare expenditures. It can mean the difference between making it financially or having to go back on welfare. Research shows, the Commissioner said, that women have a 31 percent chance of returning to welfare in the first six months after leaving the rolls. But, if they receive as little as $100 a month in child support, the chances of returning go down to 10 percent.

Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller, Ed.D.

Commissioner Heller also raised the issue of undistributed collections. Referring to her years working in a county courthouse followed by the experience of overseeing the development of a statewide disbursement unit for collection and distribution of child support in Pennsylvania, she believes that the problem of undistributed collections has always existed. However, the Commissioner stated, "automation is helping us to quantify the problem that has always been there. I don't think that automation or

Continued on page 5, "Story"

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Administration for Children and Families
Office of Child Support Enforcement

Inside
OIG - Agency with a Vital Mission....2
National Payroll Week Celebration....4

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OIG – Agency with a Vital Mission

By: Jan Rothstein

OCSE recently asked staff members at HHS' Office of the Inspector General some general questions we thought would be of interest to *CSR* readers.

Q: *What is the mission of HHS' Office of Inspector General?*

A: The Office of Inspector General's statutory mission is to protect the integrity of the department's programs as well as the health and welfare of beneficiaries served by those programs. The mission is carried out through a nationwide network of audits, investigations, and inspections.

Q: *Who is the Inspector General?*

A: Ms. Janet Rehnquist was sworn in as HHS' fourth Inspector General on August 8, 2001. Prior to joining HHS, she served for several years as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, concentrating on health care fraud enforcement.

Q: *How is the Office of Inspector General organized?*

A: The OIG is organized into five components. Of these, states are most likely to interact with the Office of Audit Services, which provides policy direction for and conducts and oversees comprehensive audits of HHS programs, and the Office of Evaluation and Inspections, which conducts evaluations of HHS programs to identify vulnerabilities, to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse, and to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness in HHS programs.

Q: *Why does the OIG study child support enforcement issues?*

A: As the agency responsible for the integrity of HHS' more than 300 programs, OIG conducts periodic audits and inspections of those programs, including OCSE programs, to assess their efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

OIG also works closely with OCSE on enforcing child support orders. The two agencies collaborated in 1998 in the development and implementation of "Project Save Our Children" (PSOC), a successful special initiative aimed at the most egregious nonsupport cases.

Q: *How does OIG determine which studies to conduct?*

A: The OIG commits resources to those projects that best identify deficiencies in the department's programs. However, as the work planning process is ongoing, the focus of many of these projects can evolve in response to new information and shifting priorities. At the beginning of each fiscal year, OIG issues a work plan that briefly describes the various projects to be addressed during the year.

Q: *How does OIG determine the methodology to be employed in conducting audits and evaluations?*

A: OIG auditors first establish the audit's objectives and then define the scope and methodology to achieve those objectives. For example, if the objective of an audit is to determine whether a grantee is providing services to eligible recipients,

auditors would first identify the laws and regulations that apply to the subject of the audit, and then test the actual operations of the program against the controlling laws and regulations. Recommendations on how to solve the problem are submitted to the appropriate agency. The Office of Evaluation and Inspections also uses various methodologies, including mailing surveys to locations or individuals, conducting field visits to interview individuals, reviewing case files, and examining various data bases.

Q: *What kind of follow-up is there once a report has been issued?*

A: Follow-up studies are routinely performed, especially to update audits and inspections that identified serious vulnerabilities or deficiencies in department programs or operations. Such work is performed primarily to assess whether the problems identified in the earlier study persist, and to determine whether proposed corrective action was taken, and, if so, to what effect.

Q: *Can the public send suggestions for studies?*

A: The OIG receives study proposals from various sources. Suggestions that are timely, practical, and pertinent to the OIG mission are given consideration. Because of limited resources, OIG must be critically selective in deciding which studies to undertake, giving priority to requests from the Congress and the Secretary.

Q: *Are OIG reports available to the public?*

A: Yes. They are posted to the OIG Web site for easy public access. The Internet address is www.oig.hhs.gov. Paper copies of those documents may be obtained by contacting the OIG's Office of Public Affairs at 202-619-1343.

Q: *Do states have an agency with a mission similar to that of the OIG?*

A: Yes. Some states and the District of Columbia have centralized offices with the same or similar range of responsibilities as those of a federal Office of Inspector General. Other states have attorneys general, auditors, fraud investigators, and other oversight and enforcement entities to protect the integrity of their respective programs.

Q: *What is OIG's relationship to the General Accounting Office (GAO)?*

A: The General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, and OIG, the investigative arm of HHS, have a collaborative and cooperative relationship that is structured to fulfill their respective missions while minimizing duplicative efforts. While OIG's focus is on HHS programs and operations, GAO has broad authority to evaluate all federal programs and activities, and provides analyses, options, recommendations, and other assistance to help the Congress make effective oversight, policy, and funding decisions. □

Jan Rothstein was the OIG-GAO Liaison for the Technical Assistance Branch of the Division of State, Tribal, and Local Assistance.

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CHILD SUPPORT.

National Payroll Week Celebration

During National Payroll Week, September 3 through 7, 2002, the American Payroll Association chose to highlight the nation's child support program as its partner in government. Child support programs across the county benefit immensely from the information employers provide through new hire reporting and from the child support collected through income withholding.

To celebrate Payroll Week, Virginia's Department of Social Services hosted a kickoff showcasing the partnership between child support and employers in the collection of child support. Connie White and Phyllis Sisk, of the Virginia Division of Child Support Enforcement, developed the program for the event, which included a tour of the State Disbursement Unit where members of the press could see first hand how automation works.

The commitment of Virginia's more than 175,000 employers helps improve the lives of our children, according to the Virginia Department of Social Services Acting Commissioner, Ray C. Goodwin. He stated further, "Employers play a significant role; employers and their payroll staff are tremendous partners in collecting child support for children in Virginia. Virginia's employers, in partnership with the child support program, are critical in the collection of child support for more than one quarter of Virginia's children." Mr. Goodwin went on to add that in the past year, 75% of collections totaling $474 million came from income withholding by employers.

Virginia's Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Jane H. Woods, OCSE Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller, American Payroll Association-Executive Director, Dan Maddux, and a representative from Canon, a large Virginia employer, joined Mr. Goodwin and the staff of the Virginia child support office in paying tribute to the nation's wage earners and employers.

Dr. Heller expressed appreciation to employers for the tremendous job that they do in helping "the child support enforcement community do its job". She encouraged employers to take advantage of the more efficient electronic transmissions to reduce the likelihood of human error in payment processing. Virginia's State Disbursement Unit processes $2 million in collections each day, with over 16.5% of those collections coming through electronic funds transfer, and over 99% of collections disbursed to the family within 48 hours.

From left to right: Ray C. Goodwin, Acting Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services, Jane H. Woods, Virginia's Secretary of Health and Human Services, and OCSE's Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller.

The comments of Mr. Maddux and the representative from Canon reflected the employers' commitment to the child support cause. Employers recognize that their role is key in getting support to families and they are willing to do all they can to facilitate its collection. They also appreciate all the work that child support workers do to provide assistance to them, whenever needed. The Virginia child support program, Dr. Heller, and Carol Callahan, the manager of OCSE's Employer Services Division, received plaques from the American Payroll Association, commemorating the partnership between the child support enforcement community and employers. □

Story

Continued from page 1

state disbursement units created the problem of undistributed collections. I think it's shone a spotlight on it." The Commissioner further noted that in some states undistributed collections have gone down, which is another part of the story behind the numbers.

The second major point of Dr. Heller's speech was to raise the issue of "the importance of the child support enforcement program maturing to the point at which we don't oversimplify." An example of this, the Commissioner cited, is when we "apply the same rule, no matter what," and we don't "take into account the complexity of the situation."

She then listed areas of the child support program where we need to steer clear of "simple answers" and opt instead for more "mature answers." One area is the management of arrears. The simple answer would be no compromise. A more mature answer might be to try and find a way to "reduce the debt owed to government if the obligor pays regularly on current and some on arrears." Another area is marriage. The simple answer is that this is not our issue since our clients are divorced or not planning to marry. The mature answer, the Commissioner suggested, might be to look at the studies that show that at the time of paternity establishment, most couples are romantically involved. So we ought to try and find a way to bring the subject of marriage up.

Dr. Heller ended her remarks by reminding the audience that Congress and the American people have entrusted us with extraordinarily powerful tools, "but, we will lose that faith and trust if we don't tell the story behind the numbers – acknowledging who is and who isn't getting the help they need." In conclusion, the Commissioner said, "our customers are looking to us for justice. We are not just a collection agency. We are protecting kids from injustice. This work is hard, but it is noble." □

Minnesota Access and Visitation Pilot a Success

A pilot program in two Minnesota Counties – Ramsey and Stearns – has been successful in reconciling parents' differences regarding visitation, according to state evaluation.

The Cooperation for the Children program provides a means to help parents experiencing problems with parenting time and custody, or seeking to change existing arrangements, through low-cost mediation services.

The Supreme Court of Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office released its evaluation in April 2002. About 75 percent of all the mediation contacts in both counties resulted in some form of agreement – a satisfactory rate compared to similar programs nationwide.

"We do everything we can to help parents resolve their differences," said Cynthia Waters, director of Ramsey County's program. "Sometimes that means agreements that don't necessarily go in a court file." Waters said the county staff encourages voluntary participation before automatically getting court orders. She hopes to streamline their process even more for parents who wish to stay out of the court system. □

Reprinted from the Minnesota "*Child Support Quarterly*." These two pilot projects are funded through a combination of Federal Child Access and Visitation Grant and state funds.

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Conference and Events Calendar

October

13-17 - *Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council (WICSEC) 19th Annual Training Conference*, Portland, OR, Cheri Breitenstein, (503) 945-6158.

16-18 - *Michigan Family Support Council, 20th Annual Training Conference*, Harbor Springs, MI, Ellen Durnan, (517) 241-8051.

20-22 - *Illinois Family Support Enforcement Association (IFSEA) 14th Annual Conference & Members' Meeting*, Naperville, IL, Yvette Perez-Trevino, (630) 844-8935.

20-23 - *Ohio Family Support Association Conference*, Columbus, OH, Ashton Allen, (513) 946-7197.

20-24 - *ACF/State Information Systems Meeting*, Honolulu, HI, Robin Rushton, (202) 690-1244, Note: State and Federal Staff Only – No Vendors.

27-31 - *Domestic Relations Association of Pennsylvania Annual Conference*, Farmington, PA, Jeannette Bowers, (717) 299-8145 or 299-8138.

November

18-19 - *National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Rocky Mountain Interstate Conference*, Denver, CO, Jacqueline Williams, (202) 624-8180.

20-22 - *Nevada Child Support Enforcement Training Conference*, Mesquite, NV, Tanya Osborne, (775) 684-0704.

December

11-13 - *21ST Annual New Jersey Child Support Conference*, Atlantic City, NJ, Eileen Coughlin, (609) 588-3399.

12 - *National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Child Support Tele-Talk Broadcast*, The New Uniform Parentage Act, Jacqueline Williams, (202) 624-8180.

In Memory of Walter H. Marceillars

Child Support Children First

Signing of the United States and Norway Reciprocal Agreement

A reciprocal child support agreement between the United States and the Kingdom of Norway was signed on June 10, 2002. Pictured here is the signing which took place in the historic Treaty Room of the Department of State. From left to right: Jens Eikaas, Deputy Chief of Mission, Norwegian Embassy; Knut Vollebaek, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway; Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, Commissioner, Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement; William Howard Taft, IV, Legal Advisor to the Secretary of State; Mary Helen Carlson, Attorney for Private International Law, Department of State. □

Secretary Signs Report to Congress

Under the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998, the Secretary of Health and Human Services is required to submit a report to the Congress regarding the accuracy of the data maintained by the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) and the effectiveness of the procedures designed to provide for the security of such data. The report, which was signed by Secretary Thompson on August 28, is available at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2002/reports/ndnh_data_accuracy.html

It is in two parts. The first part describes a series of studies performed to verify the accuracy of the data in the NDNH. The report concludes that the accuracy of the data on the NDNH is, in general, high. The second part provides an overview of the extensive security requirements and procedures for the NDNH. These requirements and procedures are integral to NDNH operations and remain a high priority for the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. □

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Child Support Report

Dr. Heller Speaks on Information Systems Management

Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, Commissioner of the Office of Child Support Enforcement, was one of the featured speakers at the American Public Human Services Association's Information Systems Management meeting in Phoenix, Arizona on August 19, 2002.

The Commissioner emphasized the challenges facing information technology staff and government officials in striking the correct balance between competing interests. For example, she suggested ways to encourage strategic collaboration among different levels of government, how to maintain a balance between the need for Federal oversight and monitoring and a state's desire for flexibility in the approval process for systems expenditures, and how to maintain a balance between security/privacy and the desire for service integration and better communication between these "stovepipe" systems. Dr. Heller also discussed her recent testimony before the House Subcommittee on Government Reform and Procurement Policy. ☐

Child Support Report
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Child Support Report is a publication of the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services.

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Child Support Report

Office of Child Support Enforcement Vol. XXIV, No. 11, November 2002

Interstate Paternity Establishment

By: Harvey Baker

Oregon has long recognized the value of having both parents involved in the lives of their children. In keeping with this mission of ours to promote positive parental involvement, we rely heavily on administrative process as part of our paternity and support establishment procedures.

Administrative orders are used to establish paternity in cases referred through the child support enforcement process. Use of the voluntary acknowledgment of paternity is also encouraged. The voluntary acknowledgement can be completed in the hospital at the time of birth or any time after that as long as it meets the minimum requirements specified by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

The Oregon Division of Child Support has a strong working relationship with the Oregon Health Division Center for Health Statistics and Vital records. Vital records will accept our administrative order or a voluntary acknowledgement to amend the birth record to add the father's name. Placing the name of the father on the birth certificate is the first step in creating a culture in which both parents are willing to take responsibility for their children. When necessary, we are also able to initiate child support enforcement procedures.

As we were working within this framework, we discovered that, while we could amend an Oregon birth record, we were passing up an excellent opportunity to improve our customer service by changing birth records outside the state. In order to do this, collaborative partnerships would have to be established with other states to take advantage of the work done by them, or for them in, the establishment process.

Placing the name of the father on the birth certificate is the first step in creating a culture in which both parents are willing to take responsibility for their children.

This has been done. The Oregon Department of Justice now pays fees of approximately $6000 per month charged by the Oregon Health Division to amend Oregon birth records when any other state division of child support submits those changes. We give full faith and credit to a determination of paternity made by any other state, whether established through voluntary acknowledgement or administration of judicial process. Approximately 240 fathers are added to Oregon's birth records each month as a result of this process.

Each state has the ability to establish fees for amending birth records. States must also formulate

Continued on page 7, "Paternity"

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U.S. Department of
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Office of Child Support Enforcement

Inside

From Stream to River.....4
Improving Child Support Performance.....6

12th National Training Conference

The 12th National Training Conference, an annual event hosted by the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), was held September 23-25 in Arlington, Virginia. A record 600 persons were in attendance, representing approximately 47 jurisdictions and 7 tribes.

This year's conference began with a remembrance of September 11 – that fateful day. A video montage, accompanied by a moving rendition of "America the Beautiful" by Barbara Ziegler-Johnson, a Grants Management Specialist in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), was a fitting way to open this year's conference.

Dr. Sherri Z. Heller, Commissioner of OCSE, early on in her keynote address, praised the child support community for a job well done during a year of increasing budget constraints. "In spite of this," the Commissioner said, "my job is to convince you to engage in more productive partnerships with local TANF workers, begin a more comprehensive effort to get medical coverage included in child support orders, undertake a more systematic results oriented focus on cleaning up interstate case processing, and to participate in the new policy debates on youth development, working with faith-based organizations and talking to clients about the value of marriage for children." Picking up on the conference theme, Dr. Heller noted that this would amount to "Working Together and Keeping it Real."

In the opening plenary, David Siegel, Deputy Commissioner, Federal OCSE, moderated a panel consisting of ACF Hub Directors Mary Ann Higgins (Region II), Leon McCowan (Region VI), Joyce Thomas (Region V), and Carlis Williams (Region IV), with ACF's Principal Deputy Secretary Chris Gersten acting as respondent.

Each panel member focused on one of ACF's Key Priorities for FY 2002, describing many state activities that address ACF's priorities, and making the point that the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program has a key role to play in helping ACF achieve its priority goals for children and families. Mary Ann Higgins stressed the importance of a strong IV-A/IV-D connection. Carlis Williams showed the relevance of the Marriage Initiative to child support. Leon McCowan emphasized the strategic role that positive youth development can play in supporting our children. And Joyce Thomas pointed out the benefits to the child support community that would result from closer collaboration with faith-based and community-based organizations.

State Senator Don Hargrove of Montana and Representative Matt Entenza of Minnesota, along with Stephanie Wilton of the National Conference of State Legislators, contributed a state perspective on the status of CSE programs. They spoke about the budget shortfalls many states are experiencing and the effect this is having on CSE programs.

In addition to the plenary sessions, participants chose from a selection of 48 workshops, ranging in topics from arrears management to web-based employer services. OCSE conducted the first delivery of its "Customer Service Web Development" course – training that will be repeated in selected sites throughout the fiscal year.

The annual meeting of state Child Access and Visitation coordinators was held in conjunction with the conference. This was an attempt to show that this relatively recent program has a vital role to play in raising the level of support for America's children. Workshops focused on innovative state Access and Visitation Program practices, connecting child access to increased child support collections, working with faith-based and community-based organizations, and an overview of recommended changes to the Child Access Program Survey, including outcome measures.

OCSE's 2nd Annual Research Conference, held in conjunction with the conference, expanded the range of workshop opportunities for participants. Research workshops, such as Arrears Reconciliation Management, Collaboration Among Agencies, Responsible Fatherhood and Marriage, and Special Projects for Service Improvement, were open to all conference participants. Three panels on reducing

Continue on page 3, "12th National"

HHS Awards Grants for Child Support Demonstration Projects

Fifteen states and the District of Columbia were recently awarded $1.8 million in Section 1115 demonstration grants to further advance performance of the nation's child support enforcement system.

Several of the grants are designed to help parents provide more reliable and regular child support through improved employability, parenting, relationship building and other life skills.

Arizona will expand its current collaboration with fatherhood and workforce training programs to provide an enhanced fatherhood curriculum that includes relationship building and the benefits of marriage, life skills development, and career development. Texas will provide a variety of training to paroled and recently released incarcerated parents. In New Hampshire, the Department of Corrections and University of New Hampshire will combine to teach incarcerated fathers parenting skills. Kansas will partner with Legal Services, the court, and the Shawnee County (Topeka) non-custodial parent project to build on its current program of coordinating selected legal and mediation services to parents.

Several grants provide for research into strategies for more efficient collection and distribution of child support to families.

Indiana will test the use of debit cards to reduce undistributed collections by eliminating the handling and mailing of money orders by the obligated parent and county clerks using paper transactions. Texas will have a popular grocery chain receive payments from parents and transfer them to the state child support agency electronically. The District of Columbia will analyze the composition of its undistributed collections and identify, implement and evaluate potential strategies to reduce them.

Several of the grants research the feasibility of providing incentive to parents to pay current support obligations by easing the burden of overwhelming arrearage owed to state governments on obligated parents without the means to pay them.

Maryland's grant will pay for an evaluation of a program to help low-income parents meet their child support responsibilities including successfully completing a parenting program and guidance for improving it. Massachusetts will analyze arrears and reduce them through new arrears management programs targeted to parents with varying abilities to pay. Minnesota offers low-income parents an opportunity to eliminate arrears owed to the state in return for the payment of all current support, per a signed agreement.

Colorado will develop an innovative, coordinated approach to increase the number of children in child support cases with healthcare coverage.

In addition to the 13 new grants, ACF made second year awards to four states – Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming – to conduct demonstrations on the use of data warehousing and mining in child support enforcement that began in FY 2001.□

12th National

Continue from page 2

undistributed collections, improving collections in interstate cases, and increasing regular payments by non-custodial parents, were for research conference attendees only.

The 13th National CSE Training Conference will be held on September 8–10, 2003, at the Capital Hilton Hotel in the District of Columbia.□

Continue with "Awards" on page 5

From Stream to River

By: Jerry Sweet

Jerry Sweet

The tribal child support program can be likened to a river, and my career in it to a journey along that river. When my journey started, however, tribal child support was hardly more than a stream.

In December 1996, I received a call from Mr. Bill Anoatubby, Governor of the Chickasaw Nation, telling me that the tribe had received a grant to develop a tribal child support program and wanted to know if I would return to Ada, Oklahoma, to help develop it.

Moving into this new position, I found that Indian children were not receiving their court-ordered child support; neither were their paternities being legally established. Many of these children were subsisting on the barest of necessities, quite often living on cereal, peanut butter, cheese, and bread. Once the Chickasaw Nation child support program was established, however, we were able to coordinate efforts with the state, and soon, by utilizing the tribal court systems, Indian children began receiving the support to which they were entitled.

Subsequently, we invited all the tribes in Oklahoma to participate in our child support program. When the welfare of children is involved, governments at every level find a way to work together for the good of the children. Proof of that is shown in the increase in tribal child support collections. Last year, the program collected $1,170,000 for the Indian children in our State, and paternity was established for over 300 children.

Where once the tribal child support system had been a few small streams plagued by drought, thanks to the work of its many supporters, a great river has begun to form.

The greatest significant factor in this development was the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). This bill stresses the need for government-to-government relations with Indian Tribes to either receive direct federal funding for child support programs, or to enter into cooperative agreements with their states.

Under the Interim final PRWORA regulations, seven tribes – Chickasaw Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Tribe, Lac du Flambeau Tribe, Navajo Nation, Puyallup Tribe, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, and Menominee Tribe – currently receive direct funding for child support. These have joined together to form the National Tribal Child Support Association (NTCSA).

The NTCSA, currently representing operating Tribal child support programs, is committed to uniting tribal, state, and federal programs and serving as the voice for Indian children. The NTCSA is attempting to improve communication between diverse social service programs.

The NTCSA believes that child support offices are equipped to serve as the ideal single entry point for people who need access to multiple social services. Our goal is to develop a common application form and a methodology to provide each agency

with access to the information needed to begin providing services immediately.

Leonardo DaVinci once said, "When you put your hand in a flowing stream, you touch the last that has gone before and the first of what is still to come." My career in child support takes me on a journey through what has passed, and I believe even greater things are coming.

I am grateful for the effort of people in all of the other tribal programs who are working to improve the lives of Indian citizens. Like tributaries of a river, we are coming together, and through this unity we are creating a revolution in the delivery of social services.

For additional information about Tribal Child Support and the NTCSA 2nd Annual Convention, contact Jerry Sweet at Jerry.Sweet@okdhs.org. Information is also available at NTCSA's Web site www.supporttribalchildren.org.□

Excerpted from an article that appeared in the July issue of the *American Indian Report*.

Jerry Sweet is the IV-D Director of the Chickisaw Nation Tribal Child Support Enforcement.

Awards

The following awards were given by Commissioner Heller at the 12th National Child Support Enforcement Training Conference. Congratulations!

Commissioner's Award for Exemplary Customer Service

Benidia Rice, Director, Arizona Division of Child Support Enforcement

Flora J. Henderson, Director, Navajo Nation Department of Child Support Enforcement

Commissioner's Award for Effective Problem Solving through Automation

Barbara Miklos, Director, Alaska Child Support Enforcement Division

Georgiann DeKay, Director, Washington Division of Child Support

Commissioner's Award for Interstate Cooperation

Nancy J. Thoma, Director, Iowa Bureau of Collections

Daryl D. Wusk, Director, Nebraska CSE Agency

Susan S. Perry, Commissioner, West Virginia Bureau for Child Support Enforcement

Commissioner's Award for High-Impact Problem Solving

Cynthia Bryant, Director, Texas Office of the Attorney General Child Support Division

Commissioner's Outstanding Local Government Official Commitment Award

Michael Infranco, Associate Commissioner, New York City Administration for Children's Services

Commissioner's Judicial and Executive State Partnership Award

Douglas E. Howard, Director, Michigan Family Independence Agency

The Honorable Maura D. Corrigan, Chief Justice, Michigan Supreme Court

Commissioner's Award for Consistent Commitment to the Child Support Enforcement Program

Herbert Morant, OCSE

Gaile Maller, OCSE

Commissioner's Award for Achievement Beyond the Call of Duty

Joseph Bodmer, OCSE

Commissioner's Group Award for Achievement Beyond the Call of Duty

Donna Bonar, Elizabeth Matheson, Eileen Brooks, Roy Nix, Veronica Lamka, OCSE

Commissioner's Partnership Award

Susan Greenblatt, James Rich, Jean Robinson, OCSE

Jim Cudzilo, OCSE

Commissioner's Regional Leadership Award for Exemplary Technical Assistance

Gary Allen - Region VII

Edward Franklin - *Region* VII □

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Improving Child Support Performance

By: Mohan Kumar

Today, in the post-PRWORA phase, Child Support agencies are faced with tougher challenges than ever before. Increasing expectations for performance improvements from program offices, the pressures of the federal data reliability audits, and the public pressure to "do more with less" are all requiring agencies to refocus their goals and manage their operations with a more business-like focus.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's automated child support enforcement system (PACSES) project recognized this business challenge as early as 1999, and confronted it head-on with some strategic organizational decisions and judicious use of technology.

PACSES realized that "data integrity" is critical not only from a reporting perspective but also is vital for the ultimate success of the program.

PACSES realized that "data integrity" is critical not only from a reporting perspective but also is vital for the ultimate success of the program. In early 1999, a new Data Management group was created to address "conversion data" issues. However, the group soon assumed a more vital role – one that addressed "ad hoc reporting" needs for the counties, and performed the required data analysis to isolate data problems and identify potential areas in the PACSES application to help accomplish 'quick wins' for performance improvement.

To supplement the analytical and reporting initiatives of the Data Management group, PACSES decided to leverage Data Warehouse technology. The PACSES Data Warehouse is a data repository and retrieval system that today helps PACSES find meaningful program information from its child support operational data such as – trend analysis, comparative analysis, performance measurements, and PRWORA enforcement remedy outcome measurements.

The Data Management group complements nicely the PACSES mainframe operational reporting features with targeted "cleanup" and "performance focused" reports. In the last two years, the accomplishments of this group have been in the following areas: improved collections, improved business practices, enhanced communication with counties, implementation of more efficient enforcement remedies, and overall improvement in county performance.

The PACSES Data Warehouse today completely supports all the federal reporting requirements. The data reliability audit requirements are fully supported from the Data Warehouse. It additionally helps to monitor the effectiveness of PRWORA enforcement initiatives, such as Driver's License, New Hire Reporting, Financial Institution Data Match, and Credit Bureau reporting.

The Program office for Self-Assessment review also internally uses the Data Warehouse. It has features not only to track and assess process efficiencies, but also to provide the ability to identify "actionable cases" that counties can work on to correct and improve their efficiency.

Data integrity is critical to program performance. Data issues must be resolved up front as early as possible. One approach may be to create 'task groups' to build necessary momentum with the data management efforts.

Child Support Children First

The use of program intelligence tools such as Data Warehouse and Data Mining must be driven by the Child Support Program personnel not IT staff. It is important to communicate 'why' it needs to be used, and 'why' it is important to the performance of the program.

Data integrity is critical to program performance.

While you use new technologies such as a Data Warehouse, remember that a sizable amount of the work and effort is in the backend process – i.e., integrating data sources, defining what data you need, and designing the backend structures and processes. Provide the "views" of the information that the "users" want, otherwise they will not use it. Gain consensus on the business rules and definitions early on in the process.

The saying, "If you build it, they will come," is not necessarily true. This is a new way of getting data/information and most people won't make this transition alone. Sometimes, it is "Too Much" information for those afraid of what the data tells.

Metadata (i.e. data about data) is critical. Definitions and business rules must be documented, understood and accepted in order for the program intelligence environment to be embraced.

For further information about the PACSES Data Management initiatives, *contact jaypoe@pacses.com,* (717) 705-5120. □

Mohan Kumar is the Technology Innovations Manager on the PACSES Project.

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Paternity

Continued from page 1

policies to deal with handling paternity orders established within their jurisdiction, when the child was born in another state. Often, the determination results in filing the orders affecting birth records within the States' own borders and then discarding orders outside its jurisdiction.

In June 2001, Oregon undertook a project to work with the State of Washington's Department of Social and Health Services to establish a program where Oregon would accept any determination of paternity by Washington. We would then amend our birth records to add the new father, and our Division of Child Support would pay the administrative fee. Washington agreed to investigate the possibility of reciprocating in kind. The resulting agreement should eliminate the situation in which one state, for example Washington, shows birth records indicating that paternity is still at issue for a child born in state, while Oregon has a valid paternity order for the child.

Working with John Hoover, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, and Phil Freeman, Washington Vital Records Division, Community Human Services (CHS) began a program that allows Oregon to send administrative paternity orders to CHS. To date in 2002, Washington has accepted approximately 30 Oregon administrative paternity orders. It is important to note that although Washington does not use administrative process to establish paternity, CHS treats the Oregon administrative order in the same manner as a court order entered in Washington. CHS also names the father on the birth certificate without any additional cost to Oregon.

Given this positive experience of collaboration between two neighboring states, perhaps other states might want to explore doing this. □

Harvey Baker is East Portland Branch Manager, DOJ, Division of Child Support.

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Child Support Report

Custodial Parents and Their Child Support

Recently released census data show that the proportion of custodial mothers taking part in the nation's public assistance programs – a ratio of 4 in 5 are single – fell from 26 percent to 11 percent over six years.

Employment rates for custodial parents grew since 1993, with more than half working full-time in 1999. At the same time, the proportion of mothers and their children living in poverty dropped 8 percentage points – to about 3 in 10 families.

The report shows that about three-quarters of custodial parents received at least some child support payments. The proportion receiving all payments rose from 36.9 percent in 1993 to 45.1 percent in 1999.

Custodial mothers received about 60 percent of the support due them in 1999, while custodial fathers collected almost 48 percent.

Custodial mothers who received any child support payments received an average of $3,800 in 1999; fathers averaged $3,200.

Source: *U.S. Census Bureau*, http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2002/cb02-137.html ☐

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Child Support Report

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NEW YORK CITY HELPS PARENTS HELP THEIR CHILDREN

By: Judy Albury

A parent who has no source of income can not pay child support regularly. That was the reasoning behind the Office of Child Support Enforcement in New York City joining forces with community-based organizations and Family Court to implement **STEP** (Step Through Employment Program). STEP gives participants the opportunity to obtain job training and utilize placement services with the goal of satisfying their child support obligations.

STEP incorporated and expanded upon the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program (NCPEP), introduced in New York City in 1995. NCPEP was a mandatory Family Court program that targeted non-custodial parents (NCPs) who were in court for a violation petition and whose children were Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. NCPEP referred parents to one of three organizations contracted to provide job training and placement services. NCPEP was successful as far as it went. STEP is the result of the need to enhance this program.

STEP was implemented in February 2002 as a pilot project in Manhattan. Manhattan Family Court hears the City's TANF-related child support cases, as well as the non-public assistance cases originating in that borough. STEP is open to any NCP appearing in court for a child support hearing. The only requirement for STEP is an inability to pay child support due to unemployment or underemployment. The children do not have to be recipients of public assistance in order for the NCP to qualify for a referral to one of 12 programs offering employment counseling, training and placement.

At a hearing for a new child support case, if the NCP agrees to enter STEP, a temporary child support order of $25 per month is set. In cases where the hearing is the result of a violation of a child support order, participation in the program is mandatory.

Child support caseworkers interview NCPs referred to STEP to assess which program best suits their needs. Once employed, a portion of the NCP's earnings is garnished for child support payments.

The success of STEP depends on the cooperation of the Family Court and the active participation of the organizations providing services. The Family Court hearing examiners have made the referring of parents for employment services a high priority.

As referrals increased, more organizations willing to provide services were needed. In order to expand from the original three to the current twelve community-based organizations, New York City's OCSE looked to its existing partnerships with programs that provide a variety of services to young fathers in ex-

Continued on page 5, "New York"

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Inside

A Celebration of Fatherhood.....3
Vermont OCS Develops Document Imaging System.....7

Massachusetts eCSE Case Manager

By: Tim Murray

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue Child Support Enforcement Division (DOR/CSE) recently unveiled its eCSE Case Manager - an online tool offering customers another channel of service. The eCSE capability was designed to increase accessibility to case information and services for external child support customers, as well as to improve business processes for the division's customers.

The eCSE capability was designed to increase accessibility to case information and services for external child support customers.

Accessible 24/7, the Web site, located at www.mass.gov/dor, provides a number of interactive features for its users. By using both a Personal Identification Number and an Access Code, customers can view payment information, arrears balances, case status, and a listing of recent case activity, as well as find directions to any state probate courthouse. In addition, customers can change their addresses, update missing case information, apply for services, and request a copy of their payment history online.

Another key feature is the Interstate Case Inquiry Form. This allows other IV-D agencies to complete and submit the required information online.

Navigating the eCSE is not just limited to customers with child support cases. A DEMO feature is available for anyone who would like to take a tour of the Case Manager. In addition, the Case Manager maintains a listing of authorized third parties who are assigned their own PIN that allows them to view their client's information online.

The 200,000 visitors to the eCSE already exceed the number projected for the year, and recent trends indicate that traffic will continue to increase. September 2002 saw 5900 unique users accessing the site, with an average of six visits per customer.

More features are planned for the eCSE. Work is underway to provide direct deposit of custodial parent checks, electronic funds transfers from non-custodial parent's bank accounts, acceptance of credit card payments online, and more customer service-friendly options such as co-browsing, text chat, and "call-me" buttons.

DOR/CSE encourages anyone interested to visit and take a tour of the Case Manager via the DEMO feature at https://ecse.cse.state.ma.us/ECSE/Login/login.asp

Questions about the eCSE Case Manager can be directed to: Cheryl Traina at (781) 213-1000 x31206 or trainac@dor.state.ma.us□

Tim Murray is a Management Analyst for the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Child Support Enforcement Division.

A Celebration of Fatherhood

By: Diane Brown

The 12th annual Festival of Fathers and Families was held in the summer of 2002 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The festival is a multicultural community-based celebration of fatherhood. It is a public declaration that dads play a significant role in the lives of their children, their families and their community. The event, sponsored and supported through the collaborative efforts of agencies and organizations that work with fathers in the Twin Cities area, including the Hennepin County Child Support Office, was created to improve the image of fathers and to develop a greater appreciation of fathering in the near northside of Minneapolis.

It is a public declaration that dads play a significant role in the lives of their children, their families and their community.

The festival is an annual event of celebration, recognition, food, fun and music. Featured this year was a petting zoo, pony rides, face painting, moonwalk, music bookmobile, giveaways, and lots of food. All of the activities were free of charge. 571 people attended. Over 25 sponsors made donations of money, food, door prizes, and tee-shirts for the volunteers and fathers. Almost 50 people donated time to staff the event, including workers from the Hennepin County Child Support Office.

The festival provided a great opportunity for information sharing. Twenty vendors set up display booths. Besides the County Child Support Office, the County District Court, several health organizations, child-focused agencies, and community-based fathers groups were on hand to distribute literature and answer questions. The District Court booth provided information about Family Court, Housing Court, and how to file a motion with the Court, including modifying a child support order. The Honorable Tanya Bransford, a judge in the Hennepin County District Court, was there to answer questions about the court system.

One of the highlights of the day was a recognition ceremony honoring individual fathers for the contributions they have made to their families and to their communities. It was noted that many of the honorees had worked hard – overcoming significant barriers – to reach this level of commitment as a father. Each honoree received a certificate and a "Dads Make a Difference" tee-shirt.

Men are the primary planners of the festival. From its inception, although it was billed as a celebration of fathers and families, it was named the Festival of Fathers. This year, in recognition of those families where no father is present, the name was changed to the Festival of Fathers and Families. It was the desire of the planners that all families feel welcome.□

Diane Brown is a Client Services Representative in the Hennepin County, Minnesota, Child Support Office. (612) 348-3333

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

The Western Interstate Child Support Enforcement Council (WICSEC) held its 19th Annual Training Conference in Portland, Oregon, October 13, 2002. Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller delivered the keynote address, with a theme of "Going the Extra Mile."

Addressing the audience, Dr. Heller asked, "How, in this environment, can I inspire child support workers and managers to go the extra mile - to pay attention, not just to the task on their desks, but to the new approaches that might make the difference for clients who didn't get any collection last year?"

The Commissioner noted that this has been a difficult year for many state child support offices. Retirements of key personnel, staff cuts, and state budget deficits have presented major challenges to those attempting to meet the needs of children and families. Dr. Heller added, "Just when you think you're going to get to rest because your state disbursement unit is up and running, you realize there is more to do. There is controversy over undistributed collections. You have to find time to teach employer's payroll personnel how to balance check and documentation, and find addresses for all those custodial parents who used to pick up their checks at the county courthouse."

Commissioner Heller then gave some examples of what "going the extra mile" would mean for child support workers: partnering with TANF, rethinking their approach to low-income obligors, more effective working of interstate cases, finding ways to reach out to local community-based and faith-based organizations, and taking time to teach what we know about the financial and emotional costs of divorce and out-of- wedlock childbearing to young people. "These things take staff time," Dr. Heller noted, "and staff are busy enough just doing the tasks on their desk. Therefore, this will require 'Going the extra mile.' "

Another feature of the Commissioner's presentation was the discussion of what she referred to as "The Big Three," which, in her judgment, represent "the unfinished business of child support." The three are low-income obligors, arrears, and interstate.

> ***"I am suggesting that by going the extra mile – reaching out to these partners, getting past our exhaustion, and taking on our unfinished business, we will collect and distribute more child support and actually get more resources to do our job"***
>
> *Commissioner Sherri Z. Heller*

With low-income obligors, Dr. Heller wants to know "what alternative source of information or income can we get, so we aren't putting in place unrealistic default orders that result in almost immediate arrears?" The questions that need to be answered regarding the arrears number are, "How much is owed to the government to reimburse past welfare expenses versus how much is owed to families, and how much accrued debt is based on imputed income and default orders?" With the interstate caseload at 30 percent, and representing only six percent of total collections, Commissioner Heller sees interstate case processing as the next project for federal/state cooperation.

Dr. Heller concluded her remarks by saying, "I am suggesting that by going the extra mile – reaching out to these partners, getting past our exhaustion, and taking on our unfinished business, we will collect and distribute more child support and actually get more resources to do our job." □

LET'S TAKE CARE OF OUR KIDS.
CHILD SUPPORT.

Washington State Holds Legal Education Audio-Conferences

By: Mary Lou Rough

Budget constraints resulted in the cancellation of this year's Training Conference sponsored by the Washington State Family Support Council (WSFSC) – an organization that includes the Washington Division of Child Support (DCS). Over the years, this annual conference has provided up-to-date training for DCS Support Enforcement Officers, Claims Officers, and Prosecuting Attorney staff members, all of whom are charged with collections that impact the state budget.

DCS, in conjunction with WSFSC, turned to audio-conferences as a way to provide some of this training. Although not a replacement for the networking and relationship-building that play such an important role in the annual training conferences, these audio conferences provide an opportunity to present training that otherwise would have been missed. In addition, participating attorneys have the chance to earn continuing legal education credits, a requirement for law practice in Washington State. DCS petitions the Washington State Bar Association to allow one credit for each audio-conference hour – a petition that has been consistently approved.

The first audio-conference, "Judicial Enforcement of Support Orders," drew more than 130 participants, including 109 DCS staff. This was more than the number of DCS staff who have regularly attended previous annual training conferences. Because of this positive response, the planned four audio-conferences per year were expanded to one audio conference per month.

Participation has increased to include the Office of Administrative Hearings, the State Tribal Relations Unit, the State Office of General Administration, and the Division of Child Care and Early Learning. An unanticipated benefit of this expanded audience has been increased communication between staff in government agencies that share a primary focus – the well-being of children.□

Mary Lou Rough is the Support Enforcement Officer of the Washington Division of Child Support. (360) 664-5353.

New York

Continued from page 1

change for the establishment of paternity and a child support order.

With encouragement from New York City's child support program's Paternity & Community Outreach Unit, more programs joined the court-based STEP effort to bring low-earning parents into the workforce. Since STEP was implemented, 625 NCPs have been referred for interviews. 128 either failed to comply, dropped out or were rejected. The remaining 80 percent moved into various stages of training and employment.

The community-based organizations providing job training and placement are required to complete an evaluation report on each NCP after a three-month period. That report is considered when decisions are made concerning the disposition of the child support case in court.

The apparent success of STEP suggests that the program will expand to the family courts in New York's four other boroughs. In addition, the City would like to develop a system that allows non-custodial parents to be referred to the STEP program at other points of contact.

According to Michael Infranco, Associate Commissioner for the New York City Office of Child Support Enforcement, "In the past, we were unable to collect child support from parents without the means to pay. STEP gives us the opportunity to participate in a process that provides a service to our city's parents and children. Giving parents the means to provide financial support for their children helps us reach our goals."□

Judy Albury is the Coordinator of Community Outreach at the New York City Office of Child Support Support Enforcement.

Ohio County's Successful Lien Payoff Program

By: Edward J. Harshbarger

During the first ten months of 2002, the Administrative Lien Program in Summit County, Ohio, generated $943,294 in delinquent child support payments.

The Summit County Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) is under the leadership of Sherri Bevan Walsh, Summit County Prosecutor. Traditionally, Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys have filed judicial liens. Today, under Walsh's initiative, emphasis is placed on obtaining administrative real property liens to collect past-due child support.

The administrative lien process has proven to be an effective, yet simple, process to administer and collect on delinquent cases.

Ed Harshbarger, Director of CSEA

The administrative lien process has proven to be an effective, yet simple, process to administer and collect on delinquent cases, according to Ed Harshbarger, Director of CSEA. Through October 2002, the Summit County staff filed 4,573 administrative liens. While only 228 seizures have been secured, nearly $943,294 in support has been collected.

With interest rates at an all-time low, numerous persons who have support obligations are purchasing or refinancing real properties. Once real estate companies, mortgage companies or title agencies discover the existence of the administrative lien, calls or facsimiles are received by CSEA to verify the amount of money needed to satisfy the lien obligation.

When CSEA's Child Support Specialists receive the calls or facsimiles, they immediately obtain the CSEA file, print all payment information history, obtain a copy of the lien and forward the information to their Fiscal Department, which calculates the interest which had accrued on the unpaid judgement balance.

The files are then referred to CSEA Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys who prepare lien payoff letters. These letters are sent to the real estate companies or financial institutions, requesting them to issue a check payable to the Ohio Child Support Payment Central and an additional check to the Summit County Clerk of courts for the release of lien fee. Within a matter of days, custodial parents and their children receive back support; and, in many instances, the full amount of arrearage owed.

Summit is the sixth largest county in Ohio. The CSEA employs 204 staff, has a caseload of 52,000, and collects over $80 million in child support annually.□

Edward J. Harshbarger is the Director of the Child Support Enforcement Agency, Summit County, Ohio. (330) 643-2765

CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY

Putting Children First

Child Support Children First

Vermont Office of Child Support Develops Document Imaging System

By: Sara Lee

The Vermont Office of Child Support (OCS) has launched a new document imaging system to improve case processing efficiency and customer service. All workers in OCS offices throughout the State will now be able to retrieve documents electronically at their individual computer stations, rather than having to request a hardcopy from central files.

Electronic access to documents lets OCS workers retrieve documents instantly in order to process child support cases and assist parents who have questions or want copies of documents.

Electronic access to documents lets OCS workers retrieve documents instantly in order to process child support cases and assist parents who have questions or want copies of documents. What previously could take up to several days for case file exchanges will now take just minutes. Although this process is still in the beginning stages, OCS has already seen the benefits in terms of improved customer service and efficiency.

Increasing pressure to manage volumes of legal documents is a serious issue for OCS. With new documents generated daily, adding to the already bulging files, OCS sought to implement a high-level, sophisticated information access process with the ability to categorize and deliver information efficiently both internally throughout OCS and externally to its customers.

OCS has many legal documents that form the basis of its case files. Some documents must be reviewed before others can be generated. Processes and productivity can be slowed down if a single document requires multiple individuals handling it and then passing it on. In this process only the person with the document in hand can act; others must wait their turn.

Realizing this, OCS implemented a method to digitize its document-driven processes. By instituting an integrated document management system (IDM), OCS hopes to provide better customer service, increase operational efficiencies, and greatly accelerate the pace of information sharing. As all documents exist electronically, they can be concurrently accessed by multiple employees or passed on in a matter of seconds from individual to individual. Customers will be able to receive accurate information on their documents almost instantaneously.

IDM allows caseworkers to access the information without having to request the file and wait days for its arrival.

IDM is especially important to the regional offices. It allows caseworkers to access the information without having to request the file and wait days for its arrival. In addition, this document imaging and managing system will be available for use in court and will assist courts in instantly obtaining documents to facilitate their decision making process. □

Sara Lee, is the Administrator of the Vermont Office of Child Support. (802) 241-2869, SARAL@wpgate1.ahs.state.vt.us.

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Child Support Report

Florida Online

Florida residents now have a more modern way to make their child support payments; they can pay online.

Parents can use a credit card or checking account to make payments online. They also can see when the money was received, posted and paid out. Employers who use wage withholding can also use the site.

Florida has a toll-free number that allows parents to find out whether child support checks have been posted to their accounts. This line gets about 400,000 calls a month. However, it is believed that the online service will be more efficient and provide more information.

Florida has about 1 million child support cases, and it is one of the first states to offer an online payment service. ☐

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